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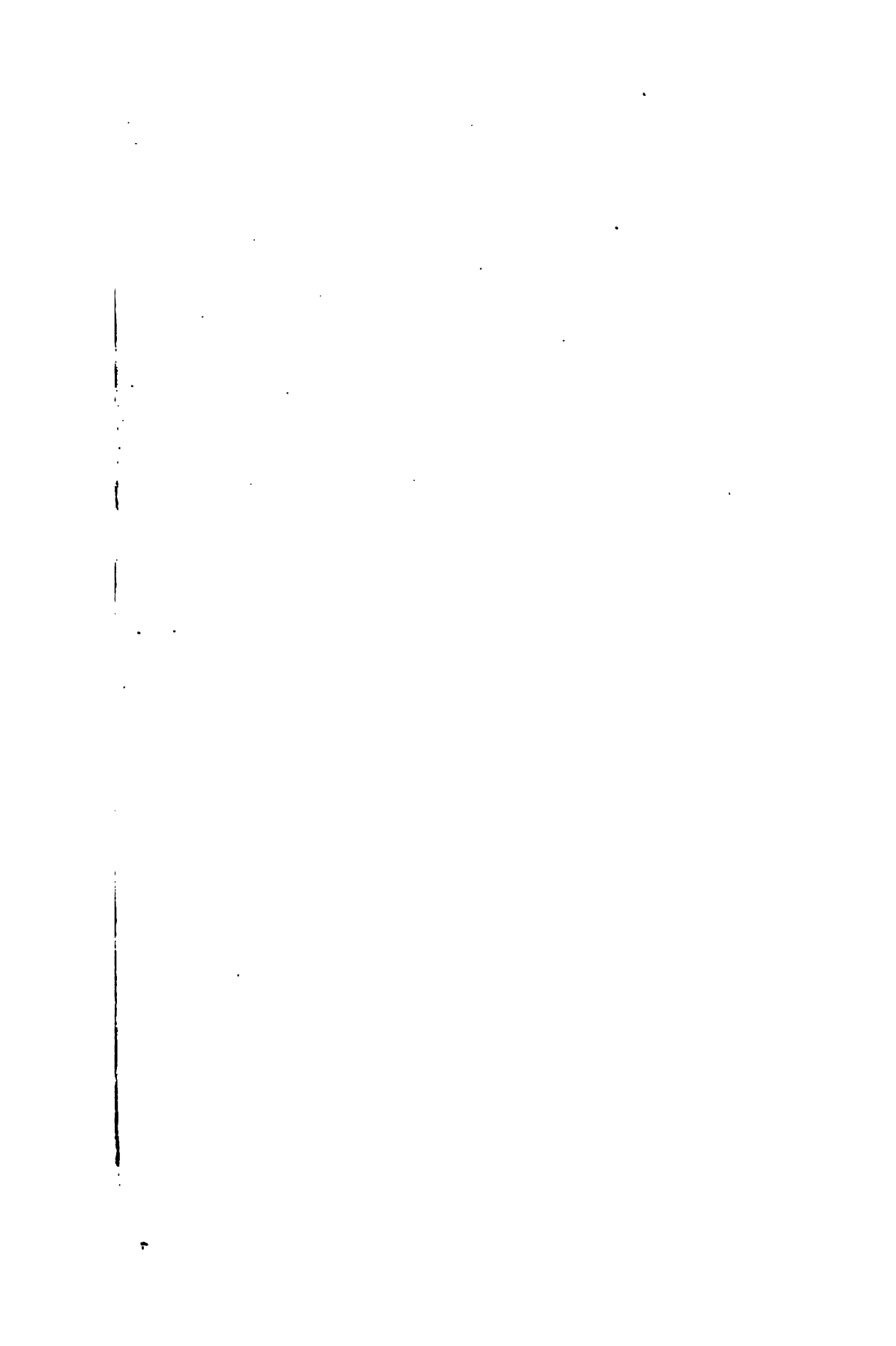


FROM THE GIFT OF

ALEXANDER COCHRANE

OF BOSTON

FOR BOOKS ON SCOTLAND AND
SCOTTISH LITERATURE



ANECDOTES OF BURNS



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INTERESTING AND CHARACTERISTIC

ANECDOTES OF BURNS

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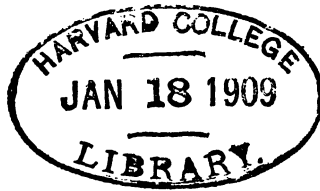
GLASGOW: THOMAS D. MORISON

LONDON

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO

1893

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Gift of
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of Boston

PREFACE.



HERE have been published, of late years, dictionaries of almost every conceivable subject, concordances to the works of our most eminent authors, and guides, bibliographies, handbooks, indexes, lists, and what not, relating to the subject matter contained in the literature of every age, all of which serve as so many keys to unlock the treasures of knowledge, much of which, without this extraneous aid, is, to the casual inquirer, or the earnest student, often extremely un-get-at-able.

Personally I have been, for nearly a quarter of a century, officially connected more or less intimately with literary men, and others, engaged in the eager pursuit of knowledge of every description, and have thus in a measure come to know their wants. One of the many of these, it is the purpose of this little book to supply. Oft and again, in my public capacity, I have been asked where such and such a fact or anecdote relating to Burns would be found, after many volumes had been searched through and much time and temper wasted on the part of the despairing reader. Some of these stories or anecdotes are contained in one work, some in another, some are disinterred from the pages of long

dead and forgotten periodicals, while only a small proportion of them are common to a few of the best biographies of the poet. Thus, by gathering them all into a single collection, ready reference can be made to one volume, instead of, as hitherto, to many. This in itself, I consider, quite a sufficient reason for the existence of this book, if such was required. But besides being in its small way a work of reference, I trust it will also prove an interesting and entertaining volume to the general reader, and a not altogether unworthy stone to cast on the immense cairn of Burnsiana, reared during the century by worshipping admirers as a tribute to the genius of the illustrious Bard.

J. I.



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INTERESTING AND CHARACTERISTIC
ANECDOTES OF BURNS

ANECDOTES OF BURNS.

The Bard's Boyhood,

OR

Burns and Jenny Wilson.

THE bard himself tells Doctor Moore the following :—

“In my infant and boyish days I owed much to an old woman, Jenny Wilson by name, who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesie; but had so strong an effect upon my imagination that, to this hour in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a look-out in suspicious places. The collection of songs was my *vade-mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.”

The Poet's Youth.

GILBERT, writing of their early years, says:—

“To the buffetings of misfortune we could only oppose hard labour and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female.”

Burns and his Brother Gilbert.

“WHEN Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together, when the weather was favourable, on the Sunday afternoon (those precious breathing-times to the labouring part of the community), and enjoyed such Sundays as would make one regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat the ‘Cotter's Saturday Night.’ I do not recollect to have read or heard anything by which I was more highly electrified. The fifth and sixth and the eighteenth, stanzas thrilled with peculiar ecstasy through my soul.”

A Father's Prophecy.

WILLIAM BURNES, the father of the poet, is said to have observed from a very early period the bright intellect of his elder born. He remarked to his wife that, "Whoever may live to see it, something extraordinary will come from that boy!" And there did!

A Schoolboy's Toast.

AT the Schoolhouse of the Parish of Dalrymple, on the occasion of the New-Year offerings by the scholars, the customary treat to the pupils was given by the teacher, consisting of a glass of cold punch, in addition to the oranges and sweetmeats usually dealt on gala days of this kind. The senior boys were generally expected to give a toast, or drink the healths of the teacher and such strangers as happened to be present. Among the visitors on this occasion was the minister of the parish, Mr Walker. The toast coming at length to Burns, the incipient bard, disdaining to follow the commonplace fashion of his compeers, gave utterance to his good wishes in the following couplet:—

"Here's to Walker in Dalrymple, and Dalrymple in Ayr;
To Shaw in Coylton, not forgetting Steele in the Stair!"

Walker, Dalrymple, Shaw, and Steele, were the names of the ministers of the respective Parishes of Dalrymple, Ayr, Coylton, and Stair. The lines possess no poetical value beyond the fact of their being one of the earliest impromptus of the Ayrshire Bard, and as evincing, in a youth of thirteen, no small readiness of talent.

Mr. Murdoch's Opinion of his Pupils.

"GILBERT always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little Church music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, 'Mirth, with thee I mean to live'; and, certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind."

Skill in Debate.

BURNS and Willie Niven entered the Parish School of Kirkoswald on the same day, to learn mensuration, geometry, and practical land-surveying, under Hugh Rodger, who enjoyed a great local reputation as a teacher of these subjects. According to the custom of the time, when pupils of their age entered school, they took the master to the village tavern, and implemented the engagement by treating him to some liquor. From that time the youths became intimate friends, and spent much of their spare time together. With the object of sharpening their intellects they fell upon the plan of holding disputations or arguments on specula-

tive questions, one taking one side and the other the other, without much regard as to their respective opinions on the point at issue. Unfortunately, Hugh Rodger, the school-master, had little sympathy with these excursions beyond the bounds of pure mathematics, and sneered at the idea of improving their minds by nonsensical discussions, and contemptuously asked what it was they disputed about. Willie replied that generally there was a new subject every day; that he could not recollect all that came under his attention, but that the question of to-day had been, "Whether is a great general or a respectable merchant the most valuable member of society?"

The dominie laughed outrageously at what he called the silliness of such a question, seeing there could be no doubt for a moment about it.

"Well," said Burns, "if you think so, I will be glad if you take any side you please, and allow me to take the other, and let us discuss it before the school."

Rodger unwisely assented, and commenced the argument by a flourish in favour of the general.

Burns answered by a pointed advocacy of the pretensions of the merchant, and soon had an evident superiority over his preceptor.

The latter replied but without success. His hand was observed to shake, then his voice trembled, and he dissolved the house in a state of vexation pitiable to behold. This anecdote is a fair prognostication of the future eminence of the illustrious poet.

/ Burns and his Books.

FROM Burns himself, from his brother Gilbert, and others, we

have received a fair list of the books he read, and which were his favourites. He says, "What I know of ancient history was gathered from "Salmon's and Guthrie's Geographical Grammars;" and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These, with Pope's Works, some plays of Shakspeare, "Tull and Dickson on Agriculture," "The Pantheon," "Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding," "Stackhouse's History of the Bible," "Justice's British Gardener's Directory," "Allan Ramsay's Works," "Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin," "A Select Collection of English Songs," and "Hervey's Meditations," had formed the whole of my reading."

He also read "Derham's Physics and Astro-Theology," "Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation," "Pope's Translation of Homer." Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Hume, Robertson, and other eminent authors came under his notice. But the two first books he ever read in private, and which gave him more pleasure than any two books he ever read afterwards, were the "Life of Hannibal," and the "History of Sir William Wallace." Of the latter, he says it "poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest." "Tristram Shandy," and "The Man of Feeling" were his bosom favourites. Of this latter work he used to say that he had worn out two copies by carrying it in his pocket. In poetry he had read the works of Thomson, Shenstone, and Macpherson's "Ossian," while his admiration for Fergusson is well-known.

Burns's Tenderness of Heart.

THIS is well illustrated in his own poems, but his brother

Gilbert also supplies us with an instance of it. He says—“Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us, as a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of Titus Andronicus, and, by way of passing the evening, began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused remembrance of it) had her hands chopped off, and her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we, with one voice, desired he would read no more. My father observed, that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us.

Robert replied that if it were left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness, but Murdoch interfered, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left the “School for Love,” a comedy translated, I think, from the French, in its place.”

His First Song.

BURNS composed his first song on his first love, who was a daughter of the blacksmith who lent him his first book, the “Life of Wallace.” He was then only in his seventeenth year, and Nelly Kilpatrick, the partner of his labours in the harvest-field, and the theme of his love-lay, was a year younger than himself.

This girl sang a song which had been composed by a neighbouring country lad, and Burns thought he might be able to compose a song too. He therefore made one upon the

charms of his handsome Nell, "Very puerile and silly," he afterwards confessed, but added, "I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies at the remembrance."

Burns and Nature.

"THERE is scarcely any earthly object," says Burns, "gives me more—I do not know that I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me, than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or a high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, "walks on the wings of the wind."

Burns and his Passions.

"My passions," he said, "when once lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme, and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet." And in another letter he tells us, "I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I once got heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were in a manner the spontaneous language of my heart."

Burns Escapes Correction from his Father.

BURNS frequently went in the evenings to pay his addresses to Ellison Begbie, the heroine of "On Cessnock Banks." As he did not usually return till a rather late hour, his father at length took alarm at the irregularity of his habits. The old man resolved to administer to his son the practical rebuke of sitting up to let him in, and also to give him a few words of gentle admonition. When Robert returned that night, the father was there to administer the intended correction; but the young bard defeated his plan. On being asked what had detained him so long, he began a whimsical narration of what he had met with and seen of natural and supernatural on his way home, concluding with the particulars afterwards wrought up in the well-known verses in his "Address to the Deil."

The old man was, in spite of himself, so much interested and amused by this recital, as to forget the intended scolding, and the affair ended in his sitting up for an hour or two by the kitchen fire enjoying the conversation of his gifted son.

"Ae Road to Heaven."

THE following is from an old book of newspaper cuttings:—Finding Allan Cunningham, in his "Works of Robert Burns," makes no mention of the circumstance, I, "Cuttle"-like, make a note of it, in the hope that it may be verified by some of your contributors:—When Robert Burns was a very young lad he had happened, at an ale-house, to fall into company

consisting of several Sectarians, and members of the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches. When warm with potations, they entered upon a keen debate about their respective persuasions, and were upon the point of using arguments more forcible than words, when Burns said, "Gentlemen, it has now been twice my hap to see the doctrines of peace made a cause of contention; I must tell you how the matter was settled among half-a-dozen of honest women, over a cup of caudle after baptism. They were as different in opinion, and each as tough in disputation, as you are, till a wife that said not a word spoke up.

'Kimmers, ye are a' for letting folks hae but ae road to heaven. It's a puir place that has but ae gait till't. There's mair than four gates to ilka bothy in Highlands and Lowlands, and it's no canny to say there's but ae gait to the mansion of the blessed.'"

The disputants of the alehouse were silenced, and Burns led the conversation, to the merriment of carlings over their cups of caudle.

C. H., in Notes and Queries.

Tarbolton Club Rule.

BURNS was instrumental in founding the Tarbolton debating club when he was only twenty-two years of age. The tenth rule of this club is very characteristic, and is probably from the pen of Burns :

"Every man proper for a member of this society must have a frank, honest, open heart; above anything dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex. No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially

no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society is a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who, if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as genteelly to make both ends meet, is just as happy as this world can make him."

Burns's Dancing Master.

HE was commonly known as "Sootee Reid," and was a native of Sorn. Erect, finely-proportioned, with well-turned limbs, very agile; he was an excellent dancer and a good fiddler. He taught dancing for many years in the west country, generally at some farmstead where there was a capacious barn, and the rustics flocked to him from all parts of the country. The Mains of Grougar was a favourite place, where the Wallaces were good musicians.

In his latter years he lived in Kilmarnock, and taught in Bicket's Hall. He generally wore a black suit with breeches buttoned at the knee, so that with a good pair of stockings, his well-formed jambs were shown to advantage. He boasted that he had learned Burns to dance, and according to his account Burns was no great shakes at the exercise.

Burns at Irvine.

ROBERT CHAMBERS relates how, in 1826, he conversed with a person who had been often in the company of Burns while he lived in Irvine. What had been remarked in him was his melancholy. Amongst ordinary people he would sit for a

considerable time with his head resting on his hand, and his elbow resting on his knee; it was only when the company was joined by some man of superior intelligence, or by a female, that the young poet brightened up. His powers of argument were thought extraordinary.

First Meeting of Burns and Jean Armour.

DR. WADDELL'S account tells the story as follows, and appends the note, "This being from Mrs. Burns's own mouth, supersedes all other accounts":

"The first time ever Mrs. Burns saw the Bard was in Mauchline. His family then lived in Mossiel, about a mile from the village. Mrs. Burns, then about seventeen, was spreading clothes on a bleach-green along with some other girls, when Burns passed on his way to call on Hamilton. He had a little dog which ran on the clothes. Mrs. Burns scolded, and threw something at the animal. Burns said:—
'Lassie, if ye thought ocht o' me, ye wadna hurt my dog.'

Mrs. Burns thought to herself 'I wadna think much o' you at ony rate.' She saw him afterwards at a dancing-room and got acquainted."

Burns and Bonnie Jean.

PROBABLY neither knew on this occasion who the other was, but their acquaintance was not to stop there.

We are enabled (says a writer in *Chambers's Journal*) to continue its history by John Blane, who was at this time Burns's plough-boy and bed-fellow. There was a singing-school at Mauchline, which Blane attended. Jean Armour was also a pupil, and he soon became aware of her superior natural gifts as a vocalist. One night there was a "rocking" at Mossiel, where a lad named Ralph Sillar sang a number of songs in what was considered rather good style.

When Burns and Blane had retired to their sleeping place in the stable-loft, the former asked the latter what he thought of Sillar's singing, to which Blane answered that the lad thought so much of it himself, and had so many airs about it, that there was no occasion for others expressing a favourable opinion—yet, he added, "I would not give Jean Armour for a score of him."

"You are always talking of this Jean Armour," said Burns, "I wish you could contrive to bring me to see her."

Blane readily consented to do so; and next evening, after the plough was loosed, the two proceeded to Mauchline for that purpose. Burns went into a public-house, and Blane went into the singing-school, which chanced to be kept on the floor above. When the school was dismissing, Blane asked Jean Armour if she would come to see Robert Burns, who was below and anxious to speak to her. Having heard of his poetical talents, she said she would like much to see him, but was afraid to go without a female companion. This difficulty being overcome by the frankness of a Miss Morton—the Miss Morton of the six Mauchline Belles—Jean went down to the room where Burns was sitting, and from that time her fate was fixed.

Burns at a Knitting Class.

AN Octogenarian" records that "Burns frequently visited

one Thomas Lambert, a writer in Kilmarnock, and occasionally would step in next door and see the widow and her two daughters, who had a class of girls learning knitting. Mrs. Bruce, mother of the late Mr. A. J. Bruce, banker, and daughter of J. Begbie, noted in "The Ordination"—

Then aff to Begbie's in a raw an' pour divine libations,

has frequently stated to the writer that she was one of these girls, and that they were all glad to have a visit from Burns,—he was so full of fun. She remembered his repeating on one occasion a humorous description of a "rocking" that he had attended a few nights before."

Burns as a Musician.

BURNS began to learn the fiddle in 1781, but never attained any proficiency. When driven from the field by bad weather, he would wile away a heavy hour in trying to learn. Occasionally, too, he rose early in the morning, broke up the kitchen gathering coal, and commenced practising; but this excited such discomposure in the family, as to render his fiddling anything but popular. He also attempted to learn the German flute, but in this also he attained no proficiency. It is amusing, nevertheless, to learn that he always kept up the idea that he was a kind of musician.

Burns at his Father's Death-bed.

MRS. BEGG furnishes an account of a scene that took place

by their father's bedside shortly before the old man's death, when she and Robert were in the room together :—

“Seeing her crying bitterly at the thought of parting with her dear father, he endeavoured to speak, but could only murmur a few words of comfort, such as might be suitable to a child, concluding with an injunction to her, ‘to walk in virtue’s paths and shun every vice.’ After a pause, he said there was one of his family for whose future conduct he feared. He repeated the same expression, when the young poet came up and said, ‘O father, is it me you mean?’ The old man said it was. Robert turned to the window with tears streaming down his manly cheeks, and his bosom swelling as if it would burst from the very restraint he put upon himself.”

Gallantry of Burns.

At a preaching at Tarbolton, Burns happened to be a hearer. Two young ladies of good position, and at that time slightly acquainted with the poet, were seated on the opposite side of the congregation in the open air. A heavy shower passed over the audience, when there was no available shed perhaps ‘to screen the countra gentry.’ Burns, who happened to have an umbrella, rare enough in those days, walked deliberately round to shelter the ladies, who had none: this he did by standing respectfully behind their chair, and holding the umbrella over their heads. When the rain ceased, and the gaping crowd expected to see him take advantage of his situation by remaining in their neighbourhood, he quietly closed the umbrella, and walked deliberately round again to his original position, where he remained a devout and attentive listener till the conclusion of the service.

The ladies in question were two of the Miss Ronalds, of the Bennals—one of them remarkable for her piety, and a subsequent correspondent of Burns himself, on topics connected with religion.

Sillar's Description of the Poet.

DAVID SILLARS describes the Poet thus:—

“Mr. Robert Burns was sometime in the parish of Tarbolton prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning, with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced [?], while it set the rustic in a roar, was not unaccompanied by its kindred attendant, suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles [meaning, we presume, his orthodoxy]. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church his plaid, which was of a particular colour, I think fillemot, he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders. These surmises, and his exterior, had such a magical influence on my curiosity, as made me particularly solicitous of his acquaintance. Whether my acquaintance with Gilbert was casual or premeditated, I am not now certain. By him I was introduced, not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where, in a short time I became a frequent, and I believe not unwelcome, visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks I have frequently been struck

by his facility in addressing the fair sex; and many times, when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noon-tide walk that a country life allows her laborious sons, he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods in the neighbourhood of Stair, a situation peculiarly adapted to the genius of a rural bard. Some book he always carried and read when not otherwise employed. It was likewise his custom to read at table. In one of my visits to Lochlea, in time of a sowens supper, he was so intent on reading, I think, "Tristram Shandy," that his spoon falling out of his hand, made him exclaim, in a tone scarcely imitable, 'Alas, poor Yorick!' Such was Burns, and such were his associates, when in May, 1781, I was admitted a member of the Bachelor's Club."

A Monsieur de Trop.

A WRITER on the heroines of Burns says: "We once conversed with an aged man in Tarbolton who had served Burns as a second or abettor in one or other of his numerous loves. They would go together at night to houses in which lived girls admired by the poet; and these girls it was the duty of John Lees to ask out for his friend, who meanwhile waited near the door. When he had succeeded in bringing out any favourite lass of the poet, he became, of course, *Monsieur de Trop*, and Burns would then say to him—

"Now, Jock, you may gang hame."

The old man seemed greatly to relish his recollections of these adventures.

"Death and Dr. Hornbook."

THE following is part of a narrative taken from the lips of the late Mr. Thomas Borland, of Kilmarnock, who once lived at Tarbolton.

John Wilson kept a school at Tarbolton, and was one of a club of young men who met for the purpose of reading essays for their mutual improvement. Burns belonged to this club, and Thomas Borland was also one of its members. On a certain occasion, when it had come to his turn, John Wilson intimated that his subject would be "Medicine." . . . He read his essay, and it so happened that Burns was to follow him at the next meeting of the club. Wilson was standing up with a small leaf of paper in his hand, from which he was reading his discourse. Borland stood beside him. Wilson had been worried, in a jocular way, by a few of the members. Burns thought the essayist should have been listened to, the more especially as he was anxious to get home, and he smilingly remarked to Borland—

"I think that creature is gaun to keep us under the influence o' his physick a' nicht."

This reached other ears, and raised a laugh.

It was on the road home that the picture embodied in "Death and Dr. Hornbook" first rose in Burns's mind. The idea set him a-laughing, and he literally staggered at his own pictorial pleasantries as it grew into form.

Next club night he was back at Tarbolton with the poem of "Death and Dr. Hornbook" finished, and there was some yill going then. One of the members of the little society, with whom Burns was on extra terms of intimacy, requested the loan of the poem for a night. Burns, with some reluctance, complied, saying, "Remember you are not to take a copy of it."

The friend promised that he would not; but he had another young friend, who kept an opposition school to Wilson's in the village, to whom he that same night showed the poem, and whom he allowed to take a copy of it. This educational rival of Wilson's set his writing class in the school to work on the following day, and every boy who could write was copying "Death and Dr. Hornbook." In a twinkling there was not a house in the parish but had a copy.

The fun was universal—at all events, everybody roared with laughter save the young schoolmaster; and he, failing to join in the laugh, left the place.

Burns as a Carter.

T. D., a newspaper correspondent, contributes some traditional particulars respecting Burns, which, though they do not throw any fresh light on his character, are sufficiently interesting to be included here. He says:

"It appears that my great-grandfather occupied a farm adjoining Lochlea, when Burns's father lived there, and as it chanced that the march-dyke between the two farms required to be repaired or rebuilt, the owner of the soil, according to custom, I suppose, supplied the material, and the work was done in equal parts by the tenants of the farms. For this work two sons were drafted respectively from the two farms, one to do the carting and the other to do the building on either side. In this way my grandfather and his brother came to be co-workers with Gilbert and Robert Burns, the latter acting as carter for Lochlea, and the trustworthy tradition declares that he proved a very poor hand at the business. My grandfather has been heard to say that Robin never could be got to set his mind to his work, and while sitting on the front

of the cart, would too often let the beast go where it pleased, he meantime confusing his head over "little bits o' pamphlets," until some kindly overthrow into the neighbouring dyke-sheugh brought him to his senses again. From the same source also it appears that the country lads, when they gathered at the 'Smiddy,' waiting their turn to get their farm implements sharpened or repaired, had an uncommonly merry time of it when 'rantin', rovin' Robin' was among them, and, when stern necessity parted them, none was more loth than he."

Indiscriminate Courtship.

MR. ANDREW HARVEY, of Park Mill, relates the following anecdote regarding Burns:

Mr. Harvey's father, when a youth, was a teacher of elementary mathematics, and also in those days a professor of music. Burns attended his music class held at Lochlea, and was on intimate terms with Harvey. He was much addicted to discussions with his friend on all topics of interest, most frequently on that of love. In some light-hearted talk of this kind one afternoon, on their way to Mauchline, the question turned on the privileges of love-making in general; whether it were better to have a number of sweethearts "in hand," or only one at a time?

"Mr. Burns, wha thocht nae man could kepp him in an argument," maintained the propriety or advantage of indiscriminate courtship.

"But my faither keppit him wi' this—If a flock o' bonnie doos gaed by ye wi' a fluff, and ye played skelp amang them

a' at ance, ye might wing and hurt half a dizzen o' them, and no kill ane."

Burns was thoughtfully, affectionately silent on this.

"He was keppit there."

A Mauchline Merchant.

MR. JOHN G——, a merchant in Mauchline, and a contemporary, in writing to a correspondent, said of Burns that he was "a curious chiel, Robin; unco fond o' talkin' about the lassies—lassies were a' his crack. He was unco fond o' an argument about religion; but I was ower young to talk wi' him about thae things."

John himself was a decent old man, a Presbyterian of the strictest school, a rejoicer in long sermons and the repentance stool—in short, a stiff burgher, so that his sympathies with the broad views of the poet were probably of the slightest.

The Awfu'est Body.

WADDELL, in his edition of Burns, says the Bard was a frequent visitor at the house of the paternal grandfather of William Reid, whose mother was one of the Misses Ronald of Bennal. "The old gentleman, who enjoyed Burns's story-telling and drollery immensely, encouraged his visits—much to the scandal of his own wife, a serious and quiet person; who rebuked the whole household, old and young, for being led away by such an idle, gossiping foolish lad, who had neither sense nor seriousness in her estimation. This

unpleasant impression having reached Burns's ears, the next time he visited Boghead a most edifying incidental discussion arose, into which Mrs. Reid was quietly and unconsciously betrayed. By imperceptible degrees it changed its character, and the good woman very soon found herself involved in the general interest excited to such an extent, that she not only laughed outright, but clapped her hands in ecstasy before the whole circle. When Burns retired, universal recriminations from the gudeman and family followed, at her sinful acquiescence, who had so often rebuked others."

"That's the awfu'est body"—was her contrite defence—"that's the awfu'st body, that Burns, I ever heard. I'm sure I set mysel' wi' a' my micht to gainstan' him, but it's perfect impossible!"

Robert and Gilbert.

BURNS was a special favourite with all about the house, because of his kindly disposition and good temper. While his brother Gilbert had somewhat of a severity in his manner, particularly when he thought there was occasion for reproof; Robert took everything mildly. A female cousin of theirs, who had helped them in the work of their farm when a very young girl, lately survived to relate that, when binding behind the reapers on the harvest-field, Robert "was always anxious to solace and cheer, and assist the younger labourers. When Gilbert spoke sharply to them, the good natured poet would exclaim—

'Oh, man, ye are no for young folk'; and he was ready with a helping hand and a look of encouragement."

A Compliment.

MRS. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Burns' early patroness, had an old housekeeper, a privileged person, who had aristocratical notions of the family dignity, that made her astonished at the attentions that were paid by her mistress to a man of such low, worldly estate as the rustic poet. In order to overcome her prejudice, her mistress persuaded her to peruse a manuscript copy of "The Cottar's Saturday Night," which the poet had then written. When Mrs. Dunlop inquired her opinion of the poem, she replied, indifferently—

"A weel, madam, it's vera weel."

"Is that all you have to say in its favour?" asked the lady.

"Deed, madam," replied the housekeeper, "the like o' you quality may see a vast in't; but I was aye used to the like o' all that he has written about in my ain father's house, and, aweel I dinna ken how he could have described it any ither gait."

Burns declared the old woman's criticism one of the finest compliments he had ever received.

"Man was Made to Mourn."

CONNECTED with the composition of "Man was Made to Mourn," the following anecdote is given in the "Land of Burns:"

In a little holm near Barskimming Bridge lived an old man of the name of Kemp and his daughter, Kate. She was one of the leading belles of the district, and as such had attracted

a share of the attentions of Robert Burns. One evening the poet had come from Mauchline to see Kate; but, on arriving at the house, he found the old man at the door in a peevish mood, and was informed by him that the cow was lost, and that Kate had gone in quest of her, but she had been so long away he was afraid that she was lost too. The poet, leaving the old man, crossed the bridge, and at the further end, he met the miller of Barskimming Mill, James Andrew, then a young man about his own age, whom he accosted thus :

“Weel, miller, what are ye doing here?”

“Na, Robin,” said the miller, “I should put that question to you, for I am at hame and ye’re no.”

“Why,” said Robin, “I cam’ down to see Kate Kemp.”

“I was just gaun the same gate,” said the miller.

“Then ye need gang nae further,” said Burns, “for baith her and the coo’s lost, and the auld man is perfectly wud at the want o’ them. But, come, we’ll tak’ a turn or twa in the holm till we see if she cast up.”

They, accordingly, went into the holm, and during the first two rounds they made, the poet chatted freely, but subsequently got more and more taciturn, and during the last two rounds spoke not a word. On reaching the stile that led from the place, he abruptly bade the miller good night, and walked rapidly towards Mauchline. Next time the miller and he met, he said :—

“Miller, I owe you an apology for my silence during our last walk together, and for leaving you so abruptly.”

“Oh,” said he, “Robin, there is no occasion, for I supposed some subject had occurred to you, and that you were thinking and perhaps composing something on it.”

“You were quite right, miller,” said Burns, “and I will now read you what was chiefly the work of that evening.”

The composition he read was “Man was Made to Mourn.”

Burns's Home at Mossiel.

A PLEASING picture is that given by William Patrick, the herd of Mossiel, regarding the poet's home. Mrs. Burns, the good old mother, then verging on sixty, a "wee boo'd body," generally occupied a chair close to the fire in the kitchen. The house-keeper was the youngest daughter, Isobel, called "Bell" by Patrick, afterwards the well-known Mrs. Begg; and during their whole residence at Mossiel there were no female servants, the whole household and dairy work being carried on by the women of the family. The poet was described by Patrick as smart, manly, and good-looking; liked by everybody, except by a few of the stricter sort." He never once saw him "the worse of liquor." He was a "guid kind maister," beloved for his good nature and kindly helpfulness by all his servants. "He was aye pickin' up things and thinkin' ower them for a lang time." He kept up with the newspaper literature of the day, Willie having to go regularly to Mauchline for the "paipers." He had a "lairge leebrary," and he read "ony buiks that cam' in his way; and in fac' he was aye readin'."

The Origin of Tam o' Shanter.

MR. WILLIAM JOLLY, in his "Robert Burns at Mossiel," on the authority of the late Mr. John Smith, Dalry, who had it from the poet himself, thus tells the origin of "Tam o' Shanter":—

The farmer of Shanter used to visit Ayr at the weekly markets. His mare, which was left tied by the bridle to the door of the hostelry to bide the weather till her master was ready to ride, had a very handsome tail. The fisher-boys of

Ayr coveted the long hair for their sea-lines; and knowing that Tam would be in no hurry to mount, helped themselves to the same, till eventually "the feint a tale had Meg to shake." Tam, exercised as to how he should excuse himself to his wife, determined to trade on her credulity, and on his way home concocted the story that he had been pursued by witches at Alloway, hardly escaping with his life, while Maggie had lost her tail in the chase!

This story getting wind through Tam's garrulous boasting, became, along with his own character, the groundwork of the immortal poem.

This, at least, is one account regarding its origin.

A Contemporary of Burns.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM, a centenarian, who lived at Newton-Mearns, near Glasgow, remembered the poet well. Her father occupied a neighbouring farm when Burns and his brother Gilbert leased Mossgiel, and she repeatedly saw and heard the poet crackin' jokes with her elder sister, for whom he had a passing fancy. The statement seems probable from the fact that this same elder sister was in a "Shooin'-schule" (sewing school) with Jean Armour, afterwards the poet's wife. The old lady "couldna understan' what the folks mak' sic a wark about Burns, for he was a lowse, thriftless fellow, and fain o' a dram."

She distinctly remembered the local characters celebrated by Burns—"Racer Jess," "Holy Willie," "Auld Nanse Tinnock," "Posie Nansie," and others, immortalised by the wit and genius of the Bard.

The Auld Licht and the New Licht.

ONE Sunday morning, some time before Burns commenced author, when he and his brother Gilbert were going to the Parish Church of Tarbolton, they got into company with an old man, a Moravian, travelling to Ayr. It was at that time when the dispute between the Old and New Light Burghers was making a great noise in the country; and Burns and the old man entering into conversation on the subject, differed in their opinions about it, the old man defending the principles of the Old Light, and Burns those of the New Light. The disputants at length grew very warm in the debate, and Burns, finding that, with all his eloquence, he could make nothing of his antagonist, became a little acrimonious, and tauntingly exclaimed:—

“Oh! I suppose I have met with the Apostle Paul this morning.”

“No,” replied the old Moravian coolly, “you have not met with the Apostle Paul; but I think I have met one of those wild beasts which he says he fought with when at Ephesus.”

Burns and M'Nab the Fiddler.

PETER M'NAB, a violinist well known in his day in various districts of Scotland, used to tell of an interesting meeting with Burns at Mauchline. M'Nab was then first violin in Cooke's travelling circus; and one night, after the performance was over, he spent some time in social converse with Burns and one or two friends. The poet asked him to play

two tunes, "The Braes of Invermay" and "Roslin Castle," and listened throughout with that inspired rapture which invariably seemed to possess him when he gave ear to strains of national music.

Burns and the Clergy.

WHEN Burns first resolved to give his poems to the world, he had several manuscript copies of some of his poems handed about and read with general applause at convivial meetings. Burns one day called at his printer in Kilmarnock, and on producing his "Holy Fair," and the question being asked—"Burns are you not afraid to use such freedom with these gentry?" meaning the clergy, the poet replied,

"Why, as to my purse, you know they can make nothing of it, and for my person, you see," brandishing his oak stick, "I carry an excellent cudgel."

Singing versus Preaching.

IN Kilmarnock Burns first saw Nannie, the subject of one of his most popular ballads. She captivated him as well by the charms of her person as by the melody of her voice. As he devoted much of his spare time to the society of Nannie, and listened to her singing with the most religious attention, her sister, who had a vein of pleasantry, observed to him that he paid more attention to Nannie's singing than he would do to a preaching—he retorted with an oath, "Madam, there's no comparison."

Popularity of his Poems.

"OLD and young," says Heron, "high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, were alike delighted, agitated, transported. I was at that time resident in Galloway, contiguous to Ayrshire, and I can well remember how even plough-boys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned the most hardly, and with which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns."

Reading Burns on the Sabbath.

CUNNINGHAM informs us in his edition of the Life and Works of Burns, that, when the first edition was published, "the fame of the Bard of Mauchline flew east, west, north and south. The milkmaid sung his songs, the ploughmen and shepherds repeated his poems, while the old and sagacious quoted his verses in conversation, glad to find that matters of fancy could be made useful. My father, who was fond of poetry, procured the volume from a Cameronian clergyman, with this remarkable admonition, "Keep it out of the way of your children, John, lest ye catch them as I caught mine, reading it on the Sabbath."

Burns as a Story Teller.

ROBERT GOWDIE, Ayr, during his apprenticeship with Mr.

Hamilton (son of Gavin), writer, Mauchline, received from many ear and eye witnesses many interesting details of Burns's habits and history when at Mossgiel. Burns's gift of extemporaneous eloquence and fictitious narrative was at that time incredibly profuse, and the smithy was a frequent scene of such triumphs. Gowdie relates that "Burns took his own plough irons to be repaired; and during this process the story telling began. On one remarkable occasion, when a piece of iron was being welded, the man who plied the sledge hammer was so fascinated with the narrative, that he 'stood with his hammer thus' above his head immovable, till the iron cooled, and the process was effectually interrupted. 'Rab, Rab,' cried the smith, himself as much absorbed as any body else, 'this 'ill never do; you and me man gang for a drap of yill, or deil ae steek o' graithen 'ill be mended this nicht!' The smith's name was Meikle, and the accuracy of this statement is indubitable."

Burns at Nance Tannoek's.

MRS. NELLY MARTIN or Miller, who died December 22, 1858, aged 92, and was originally sweetheart to the poet's brother William, was intimately acquainted also with the poet himself. According to her account to escape from his tongue, if once entangled by it, was almost an impossibility. "He was unco, by-ordinar engaging in his talk," for which reason he was an invaluable visitor at the change house, where Nance Tannoek had a jesuitical device of her own for detaining him. Nance carried a huge leather pouch at her side, slung from her waist (as old Scotch landladies used to

do), filled with keys, pence, "change," and etceteras. When application for Burns was made at her door—as was often the case, "for atweel he was uncolie in demand"—by personal friends of his or rivals of her own—"Is Rab here? or is Mossgiel here?"

Nance would thrust her hand into the capacious leather pouch, and jingling ostentatiously amongst keys and coppers, would solemnly and fraudulently declare "that he wasna there (in her pouch) that night."

* * * * *

It was in Nance's parlour that the first reading of "The Holy Fair" took place. "There were present Robert and his sweetheart, Jean Armour, William and I (Nelly Martin), and anither lad or twa and thar sweethearts. Robin himself was in unco glee. He kneelit ontill a chair in the midds o' the room, wi' his elbows on the bak o't, and read owre the 'Holy Fair' frae a paper i' his han'—and sic laughin'! we could hardly steer for laughin'; and I never saw himsell in sic glee."

His personal appearance then, as described by Nelly, was striking, and must have been attractive in no common degree; and his habits simple, gentle, and gravely studious. "In a licht blew-coat o' his mither's makin' and dyeing; ay, and o' his mither's sewin' I'se warrand, in thae days; and his bonie black hair hingin' down' and curlin' owre the neck o't; a buik in his han'—aye, a buik in his han'—an' whiles his bonnet aneath his tither ockster, and didna ken that he was bareheaded—gaun about the dyke sides and hedges; an idler, ye ken—an idler jiest, that did little but read; and even on the hairst-rig it was soup and soup, and then the buik! He wasna to ca' a bonie man—dark and strong; but uncommon' invitin' in his speech—uncommon! Ye couldna hae cracket wi' him for ae minite, but ye wad hae studen four or five!"

Two Points of Observation.

ONE day as Burns was walking slowly along the village street in his customary manner, with his eyes bent on the ground, he was met by the Misses Biggar, the daughters of the parish minister. He would have passed without noticing them, if one of the young ladies had not called him by name. She then rallied him on his inattention to the fair sex, in preferring to look towards the inanimate ground, instead of seizing the opportunity afforded him of indulging in the most invaluable privilege of man—that of beholding and conversing with the ladies. “Madam,” said he, “it is a natural and right thing for man to contemplate the ground, from whence he was taken, and for woman to look upon and observe man, from whom she was taken.”

Song or Sermon.

MRS. “GRANNY” or Hay, aged 94 in 1866, was a servant girl at “Willie’s Mill,” at the age of 14 or 15. She remembered Burns distinctly. He generally stabled his horse at the Mill when riding to Tarbolton from Lochlea or Mossgiel. He was remarkably kind and pleasant, and he “straiket her head wi’ his han” on the last occasion when she was there. She relates that Burns “was a great frequenter o’ kirks and preachings, baith at Tarbolton and round about :” on which occasions he was often, almost invariably, accompanied by the “Miller himsel’,” [Mr. Muir] who had a taste for pulpit oratory, and was “an unco judge o’ doctrine.” “Burns wad speir in for him as he gaed by, and the twa gied thegither.” On one special occasion, Burns complained to the mistress of not



Poems illustrated in miniature

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being able to finish some song that had occurred to him on a Sabbath morning, in consequence of which he was afraid he could not attend Church that day—"it wouldna be right: he couldna hearken when he was fashed." In despair, he rambled out by some dykeside, where he strolled alone "till he got the sang a' richt," when he repaired to church as usual with the cheerfulness of relief and a good conscience.

A Bright One.

AN admirer of the poet being in Mauchline one day, was invited by a motherly old woman to see her goodman, who, in early life, had been a great acquaintance of the famous farmer of Mossiel. When he reached the house the wife introduced the subject of the poet.

"Oor man was a wonderfu' favourite wi' Burns."

"Ou, aye, man, him and me were wonderfu' chief. He was wonderfu' fond o' my company. Mony a crack him an' me had oorlanes, but thae days are a' gane. Ou, aye, man, when we used to gang thegither to the lime in the mornin's we haed real fun as we gaed along the road; and, man, he was sae fond o' my company that, altho' he was at the kiln afore me, and had his cart filled ready for comin' awa', he would wait on an' help me to fill my cart, just for the sake o' my company along the road!"

Here the visitor expected that he was about to open up a new chapter in the history of the bard's early days, so he eagerly put the question:

"And what sort of subjects did he incline to crack about?"

"Hoo, subject? nae subject ava; he just blather'd about his lasses, or maybe aboot a dram, mony a dram we had

thegither. You could never ken what he wad be at, but him an' me were unco great for a' that."

No doubt John was a fair type of many of the people who knew Burns, but who did not know what he meant.

Burns as a Volunteer.

AT Mauchline, Burns served as a volunteer; and once when the corps were being exercised in firing, after a few bad discharges, the captain asked:—

"Is this your erratic genius, Mr. Burns, that is spoiling your fire?"

"No," replied the poet, "it can't be me, captain, for look ye, I have forgot my flint."

Burns as a Theologian.

THERE is a story that Burns was seen lounging on horseback before a Mauchline public-house door on the afternoon of a "preaching Monday," and delivering himself with such reckless freedom on the disputed theological tenets of the day to a group of villagers, that he was fairly hissed off the scene. Was he casting his pearls before the swine?

Burying the Deil.

ON the neighbouring farm to Mossgiel—the residence of

Burns's father—lived a friend of the name of Brown, who had a son with whom young Burns was very intimate. "Tammy," the lad's name, paid a visit one day to Mossgiel, and found his acquaintance, "Robbie," engaged in the moss digging peats. The cutting was deep, and it was some time before Tammy could distinguish his friend at the bottom. The following dialogue took place:—

"Is that you, Robbie?"

"Aye, Tammy, it's me."

"What are ye daein' doon there?"

"I'm howkin a hole."

"What tae dae?"

"Tae bury the deil in."

"But hoo will ye get 'im in?"

"Aye, man," says Robbie, "that's it, that's it."

"And, to the last day of his life," said Professor Graham as he related the anecdote, "Robbie never got that deil in the hole."

Parting with Highland Mary.

CROMEK says of the parting between Burns and Highland Mary—"Their adieu was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to impose awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook; they laved their hands in the limpid stream—and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other." The lovers exchanged Bibles. That presented by Burns to Mary is now in the monument at Alloway. It is in two volumes. In a blank leaf of the one is inscribed in the handwriting of the Bard, "And ye shall not swear by

my name falsely. I am the Lord."—Levit. xix. 12. On the second volume, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths."—Matt. v. 33.

His Gude and Ill.

MR. ARCHIBALD PRENTICE could not bear to hear any one speak evil of his friend the poet. Once at a meeting of ministers and elders some of them began to denounce Burns's works as immoral. "I tell you what," said the old man, "if you had a' his ill and the half o' his gude among ye, ye'd be a' better men than ye are."

Burns at Glenconner.

AN account of the tenants of Glenconner, "the most enterprising of any family ever reared about Ochiltree," contains the following:—

"When the poet was about to publish he went with his manuscript to Glenconner, where he was a frequent visitor. Having some friends with him, there was a scarcity of beds; so after supper the lassies went to Barwharrie, then belonging to the Rev. Mr. Reid, minister of Ochiltree, and spent the night there. Not in sleep, however, for before leaving home they had managed to get possession of Burns's manuscript, over which they spent the whole night, and were back at Glenconner in the morning before breakfast. They often spoke of the extraordinary power with which Burns read his poetry. "Guid auld Glen," as the Bard styled him, was so

affected by the reading of Burns. that, when he promised to send him any of the verses, Glen entreated him not to send them, but to come himself and read them."

"Praying all Night."

THE Rev. Dr. George Lawrie, minister of the Parish of Loudoun, was one of the best and earliest friends of the poet, who was a frequent and welcome visitor at the Manse. Returning from Kilmarnock, after failing to secure a second edition of his poems in that town, he called at the Manse, and spent an evening in innocent enjoyment and intellectual conversation with the members of the family. He retired to rest deeply touched by the simple refinement and mutual affection of the family, as well as by the marked attention which had been shown to himself. Next morning, when the family were waiting breakfast, Burns had not come down, and young Mr. Lawrie was sent up-stairs to see what detained him. He met him coming down.

"Well, Mr. Burns, how did you sleep last night?"

"Sleep, my young friend, I have scarcely slept at all. I have been praying all night, and if you go up to the room you will find the prayer on the table."

Mr. Lawrie did so and found a poem, the original of which is now kept as an heirloom in the family. It is the well known and much admired "O Thou dread Power, who reign'st above," etc.

The Minister's Man.

ON one of the poet's visits to the Manse of Loudoun, the

minister's man (John Brooks by name) did not present himself to render the usual services at the dinner table. His attendance was dispensed with; but, on being questioned afterwards by Mr. Archibald Lawrie regarding his absence, John's reply was held to be quite satisfactory :

"'Deed, Sir, I was just fleyed to come in for fear Burns should mak' a poem o' me !"

Burns amongst the Printers.

THE following extract will give a very good notion of how Burns behaved in William Smellie's office. The narrator is his son Alexander Smellie, who was quite a lad when Burns arrived from Ayrshire.

He says, "I perfectly remember the first appearance of Burns in my father's printing house in 1787, at the time his poems were printing. He was dressed much in the style of a plain countryman, and walked three or four times from end to end of the composing-room, cracking a long hunting-whip which he held in his hand to the no small annoyance of the compositors and pressmen; and, although the manuscript of his poems was then lying before every compositor in the house, he never once looked at what they were doing, nor asked a single question. He frequently repeated this odd practice during the course of printing his work, and always in the same strange and inattentive manner, to the great astonishment of the men, who were not accustomed to such whimsical behaviour.

Burns, like many other people, had the wrong notion that a compositor, to be able to set up a work in a foreign language, must be intimately acquainted with it. Anxious

to know how much learning an old rusty compositor possessed whom he saw setting up a Latin work, Burns one day stopped in his career through the case-room where he used to slap his thigh vigorously with his whip, and stopping opposite the old fellow's frame, asked how many foreign languages he knew?

The compositor replied very candidly—"I wush I kent my ain weel eneuch!"

Burns's Stool.

ALEXANDER SMELLIE, son of William Smellie, the printer of Creech's edition of the poet's works, tells the following anecdote regarding the Bard:—"Burns was in the habit of attending Smellie's office to correct the proof-sheets. There was a particular stool in the office which Burns uniformly occupied while correcting his proof-sheets; as he would not sit on any other, it always bore the name of Burns's stool. It is still (1844) in the office, and in the same situation where it was when Burns sat on it. At this time Sir John Dalrymple was printing, in Mr. Smellie's office, an 'Essay on the Properties of Coal Tar.' One day it happened that Sir John occupied the stool, when Burns came into the correcting-room looking for his favourite seat. It was known that what Burns wanted was the stool; but before saying anything to Sir John on the subject, Burns was requested to walk into the composing-room. The opportunity was taken in his absence to request Sir John to indulge the Bard with his favourite seat, but without mentioning his name.

Sir John said:—

'I will not give up my seat to yon impudent staring fellow.'

Upon which it was replied :—

'Do you know that that staring fellow, as you call him, is Burns the poet.'

Sir John instantly left the stool, exclaiming :—

'Good gracious! give him all the seats in your house!'

Burns was then called in, took possession of his stool, and commenced the reading of his proofs."

Burns and the Minister.

WHEN he had made up his mind to retain a line in the words of its original inspiration—such as "When I look back on prospects drear"—he stated his reasons briefly for refusing to make any change, and then sat like his own heroine, "deaf as Ailsa Craig," to all persuasion or remonstrance. Nor did he lose his serenity of mind, though the way in which he unconsciously, perhaps, crumpled up the sheet in his hand till he almost made it illegible, showed what was passing within him. It was on one of these occasions that a clergyman, stung with the irreverent way that Burns had handled the cloth in some of his earlier pieces, hazarded some stern remarks on the "Holy Fair," not, he said, but that the poem was a clever picture, he only wished to show that the poem was not constructed according to the true rules of composition. The reverend censor did not acquit himself well in his perilous undertaking: the eye of the Poet began to lighten, and his lips to give a sort of a twitching announcement that something sarcastic was coming. All

present looked towards him. He spoke as they expected, saying:—

“No, by heaven, I’ll not touch him —— ‘Dulness is sacred in a sound divine.’”

“I’ll find you as apt a quotation as that,” said the aggressor, “and from a poet whom I love more ——.”

“Corbies and clergy are a shot right kittle.”

Burns laughed, held out his hand, saying,—“Then we are friends again.”

Burns as Spunkie.

SPEAKING one day of his own poetry, Burns said, “I have much to answer for: my success in rhyme has produced a shoal of ill-spawned monsters, who imagine, because they make words clink, they are poets. It requires a will-o’-the-wisp to pass over the quick-sands and quagmires of the Scottish dialect. I am spunkie—they follow me and sink.”

Love of Praise.

HE loved praise, and loved it not the less when it came from the lips of an accomplished lady.

“Madam,” said he to Mrs. M’Murdo, “your praise has ballooned me up to Parnassus.”

The Best Judge.

BURNS was standing one day upon the quay at Greenock,

when a wealthy merchant, belonging to the town, had the misfortune to fall into the harbour. He was no swimmer, and his death would have been inevitable had not a sailor, who happened to be passing at the time, immediately plunged in, and, at the risk of his own life, rescued him from his dangerous situation. The Greenock merchant, upon recovering a little from his fright, put his hand into his pocket, and generously presented the sailor with a shilling. The crowd, who were by this time collected, loudly protested against the contemptible insignificance of the sum; but Burns, with a smile of ineffable scorn, entreated them to restrain their clamour—"For," said he, "the gentleman is, of course, the best judge of the value of his own life."

At Covington Mains.

THOMAS SOMERVILLE, LL.D., a nephew of Prentice's, communicated the substance of the following to the late Archibald Nimmo of Carnwath, editor of the "Ballads and Songs of Clydesdale." When Burns made his first journey to Edinburgh, he paid a passing visit to the farm-house of Covington Mains, near Carnwath, where he spent the night with Mr. Archibald Prentice, the tenant.

Mr. Prentice had made known to his brother farmers that Burns was expected at the Mains, and that they were all to assemble when they saw a white sheet hoisted on a corn-stack. True to the invitation, they mustered in force when the signal was displayed. In the company were also the Rev. Bryce Little, minister of the parish, and Lang the schoolmaster, and his brother, the minister of Leadhills. The evening that was spent can easily be conceived. Burns's

wonderful conversational powers, drawn out by intelligent and congenial friends, carried all by storm. The songs and recitations, now gay, now grave, cheered and melted them by turns. In the height of their excitement, Burns said :—

“But the best of all is to come yet; only I must wait till Mrs. Prentice leaves the room.”

“Mr. Burns, you may just as well go on for I will not leave the room this night.”

“Weel, then,” said Burns, “here’s for the ‘Jolly Beggars.’”

Next morning he breakfasted at Mr. John Stoddart’s, Bank, and was accompanied by Archibald Prentice and the two brothers Lang. On arriving at the foot of the Bank brae, Lang of Leadhills said, “O, Mr. Burns, before we climb the brae just gi’e us the ‘Jolly Beggars’ owre again.”

“Na, na, Mr. Lang, the inspiration is gone.”

On arriving at Edinburgh, Burns wrote to Archibald thanking him for his hospitality, and wishing him to give his kind regards to “that oily man of God, Mr. Lang.”

All this is otherwise interesting, as it shews that the “Jolly Beggars” was written before Burns went to Edinburgh, and that he considered it too indelicate for ears polite. He never published the poem himself; it was only after his death that it was given to the world. A son of this Mr. Prentice’s was for many years editor of the “Glasgow Chronicle,” while another became the founder of the “Manchester Times.”

“Stop an’ Haud the Stirrup.”

REV. THOMAS SOMERVILLE, in his interesting book on “George Square,” says, “I have heard James Stoddart, a son of

Mr. John Stoddart [referred to above] say, when nearly eighty, that he remembered passing the Mains that morning with other companions on his way to school. The pony was waiting at the door for the owner to start on his journey. The stalwart 'Bauldy' came out and ordered him and the other boys to stop and haud the stirrup for the man that was to mount, adding, 'You'll boast of it till your dying day.' The boys said 'We'll be late, and we're fear'd for the maister.'

'Stop and haud the stirrup; I'll settle wi' the maister.'

They took courage, as well they might, for Prentice was six feet three, and the dominie but an ordinary mortal. That boy Stoddart, almost an octogenarian at the time he spoke to me, said, 'I think I'm prouder of that forenoon frae the schule than a' the days I was at it.'"

Burns and the Currie Schoolmaster.

ON Burns's first appearance in Edinburgh, he was introduced, among many others, to Mr. Taylor, the overweening parochial schoolmaster of Currie, who was also a competitor in verse-making, and whose opinion of his own merits far overbalanced what little estimation he might have formed of the plain unlettered peasant of Ayrshire, whose name was as yet new to the public.

Mr. H——, at whose table Burns was a frequent guest, invited Taylor one day to dine with him, when the evening was spent with the usual good humour and jocularly. Taylor had brought his manuscript poems, a few of which

were read to Burns for his favourable opinion previous to printing. Some of the passages read were odd, such as :—

“ Rin, little bookie, round the world loup,
Whilst I in grave do lie wi’ a cauld doup ! ”

At which Burns laughed exceedingly. Notwithstanding the pedantic and absurd perversity of the poems, Burns gave him a recommending line to the printer. Next morning Mr. H——, meeting Taylor, enquired of him what he thought of the Ayrshire poet.

“ Hoot,” quoth the self-admiring pedagogue, “ the lad ’ill do—considerin’ his want o’ learnin’, the lad’s weel eneugh ! ”

Scott and Burns.

ONE of the most memorable incidents of Burns’s first visit to Edinburgh, was Scott’s meeting with him in the house of Dr. Adam Ferguson, in George Square. Scott was then a boy of sixteen, and the sole reason of his presence on the occasion was his close and warm friendship with young Adam Ferguson, afterwards Sir Adam.

“ Of course,” Scott says, “ we youngsters sat silent and listened.” By-and-bye, however, the two poets of Scotland were brought into closer contact. Burns was deeply touched by Runberg’s representation of a soldier lying dead on the snow. Some verses written under the picture, which drew tears even from Burns, took the poet’s fancy, and he asked whose they were. Scott was the only one in the room who was able to tell that they were from a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne’s, entitled “ Justice of Peace,” and after this

information was given to Burns, he rewarded Scott with a look and a word which "The Author of Waverley" never forgot.

Guilty Sinners.

MISS RACHEL AINSLIE, the daughter of Robert Ainslie, a bosom friend of the poet, was much admired by the bard. He describes her as "a little embonpoint, but handsome; her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good humour." To this description, he adds, "She unites three qualities rarely to be found together, keen, solid penetration, sly, witty observation and remark, and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty."

One day, when at church with Miss Ainslie, as she was turning over the leaves of her Bible in search of a text quoted by the minister, the poet took from his pocket a slip of paper, and, having written upon it with a pencil, handed it to the lady, who read these lines:—

Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
Nor idle texts pursue;
'Twas guilty sinners that he meant—
Not angels such as you.

Wine and Wit.

ONE day when his friend Ainslie had returned from his office early, Burns called. Ainslie pointed to a bunker seat in the window, under which he kept some bottles of wine.

"No," said Burns, "we must not sit dozing in the house

on a fine afternoon as this is; and we don't require wine to stimulate our wit. Let us ramble over Arthur's Seat, and there feast our eyes on the beauties of nature."

After a walk, the friends returned to a late tea, and Mr. Ainslie used to relate that he had never known the poet to be more instructive and entertaining than during the stroll and the sober repast which followed it.

Burns on True Manhood.

WALKING in Leith one day, Burns met an old acquaintance, and he stopped to have a crack with him. A dandy friend who was along with the poet said, afterwards, that he was surprised he should stop to speak to such a shabby-looking fellow as that.

"What," said the manly poet, "do you suppose it was the man's clothes I was speaking to, his hat, his coat, his boots? No! it was the man within, and let me tell you, that man has more sense and worth in him than nine out of ten of my city friends."

An Injudicious Reply.

PROFESSOR WALKER, who frequently met the Bard, one day supped with him at the table of Dr. Blair. The other guests were very few; and as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the poet, the doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and make him the central figure of the group.

Being asked from which of the public places he had received

the greatest gratification, he named the High Church, but gave the preference as a preacher to (the Rev. Robert Walker) the colleague (and most formidable rival) of our worthy entertainer—whose celebrity rested on his pulpit eloquence—in a tone so pointed and decisive as to throw the whole company into the most foolish embarrassment. The doctor, indeed, with becoming self-command, endeavoured to relieve the rest by cordially seconding the encomium so injudiciously introduced; but this did not prevent the conversation from labouring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak. His secret mortification was indeed so great, that he never mentioned the circumstance until many years after, when he said that his silence proceeded from the pain which he felt in recalling it to his memory.

A Single Word.

ANOTHER of those critical scenes is well described by Professor Walker, who happened to be present. It also occurred at the table of Dr. Blair, who was fond of hearing the poet reading his own verses. "The aversion of Burns," he observes, "to adopt alterations which were proposed to him, after having fully satisfied his own taste, is apparent from his letters. In one passage, he says he never accepted any of the corrections of the Edinburgh literati, except in the instance of a single word. If his admirers should be desirous to know this 'single word,' I am able to gratify them, as I happened to be present when the criticism was made. It was at the table of a gentlemen of literary celebrity, who observed, that in two lines of the 'Holy Fair,' beginning—

'For Moodie speels the holy door,
Wi' tidings of salvation.'



The last word, from his description of the preacher, ought to be damnation. This change, both embittering the satire, and introducing a word to which Burns had no dislike, met with his instant enthusiastic approbation.

‘Excellent!’ he exclaimed with great warmth, ‘the alteration shall be made, and I hope you will allow me to say in a note from whose suggestion it proceeds;’ a request which the critic with great good humour, but with equal decision, refused.”

A Profound Blockhead.

CROMEK tells us that at a breakfast where a number of the literati were present, a critic, one of those fond of seeming very acute or wise, undertook to prove that Gray’s “Elegy in a Country Churchyard” violated the essential rules of verse, and transgressed against true science, to which he held true poetry to be amenable. He failed, however, in explaining the nature of his scientific gauge, and he also failed in quoting the lines correctly which he proposed to censure; upon which Burns exclaimed, with great vehemence—

“Sir, you have proved enough—you have proved that a man may be a good judge of poetry by square and rule, and, after all, a profound blockhead.”

The Learned Pig.

A CERTAIN stately peeress sent to invite Burns to her assembly, without, as he fancied, having sufficiently cultivated his

acquaintance beforehand. "Mr. Burns," answered the bard, "will do himself the honour of waiting on the —— of ——, provided her ladyship will invite also the Learned Pig." Such an animal was then exhibiting in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh.

Hearing the Evidence.

ROBERT BURNS dined in Edinburgh with a large party, in company with the late Lord Swinton and the Honourable Henry Erskine. Honest Lord Swinton had become extremely deaf. From time to time he observed the company convulsed with laughter; but his deafness prevented him enjoying the exquisite humour of Mr. Erskine. That, however, was of little consequence; he inquired at his next neighbour, "Is that my friend, Harry?" Being answered in the affirmative, he burst out into as hearty a laugh as the best of them; and in this manner partook in the general hilarity the whole evening. Burns next day mentioning the circumstance to a lady of his acquaintance, she expressed her astonishment that a man who could act so absurdly should sit as judge on the lives and fortunes of his fellow-subjects.

"My dear Madam," answered Burns, "you wrong the honest man, he acts exactly as a good judge ought; he does not decide before he has heard the evidence."

Outside and Inside.

BURNS was one day in a gentleman's library. The collection was very fine; but the owner happened to be a man not the most able in the world to appreciate the contents. After

some conversation with Burns, he expressed himself as being particularly anxious about the bindings of his books; he liked to see books with a handsome exterior. Next morning, the wicked poet was found to have left the following on the library table:—

Through and through th' inspir'd leaves
Ye maggots, make your windings;
But O, respect his lordship's taste,
And spare the golden bindings.

Carried off her Feet.

“ONE of the poet's remarks,” as Cromeke tells us, “when he first came to Edinburgh, was that a refined and accomplished woman was a thing almost new to him, and of which he had formed but a very inadequate idea. To be pleased is the old and the best receipt how to please; and there is abundant evidence that Burns's success among the high-born ladies of Edinburgh was much greater than among the stately patricians of his own sex. The vivid expression of one of them has become proverbial—that she never met with a man whose conversation so completely carried her off her feet.”

Burns on the Aristocracy.

DR. ANDREW THOMSON, of St. George's, Edinburgh, who once had an interesting meeting with the bard, gives us a succinct account of how the evening was spent, and the subjects discussed.

The poet “talked of himself, deplored his errors, and hinted

that pride and disappointment had had a large share in producing them, and that he regretted that after his first success he had not gone abroad. As he spoke of the aristocracy, their usage of him and of his country, he stamped fiercely on the ground, and the expression of his 'ardent eyes' became almost terrific and unearthly as they shone amid the tender gloom of the autumnal twilight. He cried—

'There will be a day of reckoning yet, as sure as yon star is shining over Griffel. Ten Glencairns would save this Sodom, and there has only been one, and he's dead.'

The Beautiful Miss Burnet.

WHEN in Edinburgh, and returning from his first visit to Lord Monboddo's house, where, among other gentry, he met his host's beautiful daughter, Miss Burnet, he was asked—

"Did you admire the young lady?"

He replied, "I admired God Almighty more than ever: Miss Burnet is the loveliest of all His works."

Weft and Woof.

MR. RAMSAY of Ochertyre, a friend of Blacklock, had the honour of a visit from Burns during his journey through the Highlands. He tells us that "when he asked him (Burns) whether the Edinburgh 'literati' had mended his poems by their criticisms—

'Sir,' said he, 'those gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine that it is neither fit for weft nor woof.'

A Braying Ass.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM says—"Burns disliked to be tutored in matters of taste, and could not endure that one should run shouting before him whenever any fine object appeared. On one occasion of this kind, a lady at the poet's side said—

‘Burns, have you nothing to say of this?’

‘Nothing, madam, nothing,’ he replied, glancing at the leader of the party, ‘for an ass is braying over it.’”

Look I Look I

ONE evening as the poet passed near the Carron Foundry when the furnaces were casting forth flames, his companion exclaimed—

“Look, Burns, look! good heavens, look, look—what a glorious sight!”

“Sir,” said the bard, clapping spurs to Jenny Geddes, “I would not look! look! at your bidding, were it into the mouth of hell.”

Cottar's Saturday Night.

“It made them Greet.”

IN 1787 Burns paid a visit to the town of Banff. A gentleman, a native of Banff, and whose years enabled him to recollect the circumstance, told the following:—

Mr. William Nicol, Burns' friend, Dr. George Chapman, then rector of the Academy of Banff, and the bard, break-

fasted together one morning in Dr. Chapman's house in Banff. "As they were to visit Duff House, the splendid mansion of the Earl of Fife, and drive through the park on their way south, I accompanied the gentlemen from the town to the house, carrying a note to the steward there from my father, that they might see the interior of the house, the paintings and valuable library. In driving through the park, Mr. Nicol asked me whether I was aware that the gentleman who was speaking to me about the park was the author of the poems I had no doubt heard of.

'Yes,' I replied; 'Dr. Chapman told me so when he asked me to breakfast.'

'Then have you read the poems? Which of them did you like best?' Nicol asked.

I said, 'I was much entertained with "The Twa Dogs" and "Death and Dr. Hornbook," but I like best by far the "Cottar's Saturday Night," although it made me greet when my father had me to read it to my mother.'

Burns, with a sort of sudden start, looked in my face intently, and, patting my shoulder, said—

'Well, my callant, I don't wonder at you greeting at reading the poem. It made me greet more than once when I was writing it at my father's fireside.'

Burns and the Bishop.

BISHOP SKINNER, son of the author of *Tullochgorum*, happened to meet Burns in Aberdeen, and in the following letter describes the meeting.

"Calling at the printing-office the other day, whom should I meet on the stair but famous Burns, the Ayrshire bard!

And on Mr. Chalmers telling him that I was the son of "Tullochgorum," there was no help but I must step into the inn hard by and drink a glass with him and the printer. Our time was short, as he was just setting off for the south, and his companion hurrying him, but we had fifty 'auld sangs' through hand, and spent an hour or so most agreeably.

'Did not your father write "The Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn"?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, an' I had the loon that did it!' said he, in a rapture of praise; 'but tell him how I love and esteem and venerate his truly Scottish muse.'

On mentioning his 'Ewie,' and how you were delighted with it, he said it was all owing to yours, which had started the thought. He had been at Gordon Castle, and came by Peterhead.

'Then,' said I, 'you were within four Scottish miles of "Tullochgorum's" dwelling.'

Had you seen the look he gave, and how expressive of vexation—had he been your own son you could not have wished a better proof of affection.

'Well,' said he at parting, and shaking me by the hand as if he had been really my brother, 'I am happy in having seen you, and thereby conveying my long-harboured sentiments of regard for your worthy sire. Assure him of it in the heartiest manner, and that never did a devotee of the Virgin Mary go to Loretto with more fervour than I would have approached his dwelling and worshipped at his shrine.'

He was collecting on his tour all the 'auld Scots sangs' he had not heard of, and likewise the tunes, that he may get them set to music.

'Perhaps,' said he, 'your father might assist me in making this collection; or, if not, I should be happy in any way to rank him among my correspondents.'

‘Then give me your direction, and it is probable you may hear from him some time or other.’

On this he wrote his direction on a slip of paper, which I have enclosed that you may see it under his own hand. As to his personal appearance, it is very much in his favour. He is a genteel-looking young man, of good address, and talks with much propriety, as if he had received an academical education. He has, indeed, a flow of language, and seems never at a loss to express himself in the strongest and most nervous manner. On my quoting, with surprise, some sentiments of the Ayrshire ploughman—

‘Well,’ he said, ‘and a ploughman I was from youth, and till within these two years had my shoes studded with a hundred tackets. But even then I was a reader, and had very early made all the English poets familiar to me, not forgetting the old bards of the best of all poetical books—the Old Testament.’”

First Book, like a First Bairn.

WHEN Burns was just on the point of starting for Berrywell, near Duns, along with Ainslie, and had actually mounted his horse, a letter was shot into his hand from Dr. Blair. It recommended Burns to take time and leisure to improve his talents, “for on any second production you give to the world your fate, as a poet, will very much depend.”

Burns laughed, thrust the letter into his pocket, and exclaimed:—

“Thank you, doctor; but whiles a man’s first book, like his first bairn, is the best.”

Love for his Native Country.

WHEN Burns was in Edinburgh, he accompanied his friend Mr. Robert Ainslie, W.S., on a horseback excursion through the south of Scotland. When they arrived at Coldstream, where the dividing line between Scotland and England is the Tweed, Mr. Ainslie suggested going across to the other side of the river by the Coldstream Bridge, that Burns might have it to say he "had been in England." They did so, and were pacing slowly along on English ground, enjoying their walk, when Mr. Ainslie was astonished to see the poet throw away his hat, and, thus uncovered, look towards Scotland, kneeling down with uplifted hands, and apparently in a state of great enthusiasm. Mr. Ainslie kept silence, uncertain what next would be done, when Burns, with extreme emotion, and an expression of countenance which his companion never forgot, prayed for and blessed Scotland most solemnly, by pronouncing aloud in terms of the deepest devotion, the two concluding stanzas of the "Cottar's Saturday Night," beginning:—

"Oh Scotia ! my dear, my native soil !
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent !"

Burns at Brownhill Inn.

A MR. LADYMAN, an English commercial traveller, alighting one day at the Brownhill Inn, found that he should have to dine with a company in which was Robert Burns.

The dinner, at which the landlord, Bacon, presided, passed off well, the principal dish being the well-known namesake of the host. The man had retired for a few minutes to see

after a fresh supply of toddy, when some one called upon Burns to give the young Englishman proof of his being really Burns the poet, by composing some verses on the spur of the moment; and there was hardly an interval for reflection when the bard pronounced as follows:—

“At Brownhill we always get dainty good cheer,
And plenty of bacon each day in the year;
We’ve all things that’s nice and mostly in season;
But why always *Bacon*—come give me the reason?”

Burns at Roslin.

NASMYTH once dined with Burns; and both having exceeded the bounds of moderation, they agreed not to go to bed, but to make an expedition to the Pentland Hills.

After an all-night ramble, they breakfasted at Roslin. Their hostess, Mrs. David Wilson, supplied the breakfast in the Scotch style. Burns, in gratitude to her, scrawled on the reverse side of a wooden platter the verses—

“My blessings on you, honest wife,
I ne’er was here before,
You’ve walth o’ gear for spoon and knife;
Heart could not wish for more.”

Heaven keep you clear of sturt and strife,
Till far ayont four-score;
And by the Lord o’ death and life,
I’ll ne’er gae by your door.”

Burns at Lochmaben Manse.

MISS JEFFREY, daughter of the minister of Lochmaben, and

possessor of the "Twa lovely een o' bonnie blue," as recorded in "I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen," says, "Many times have I seen Burns enter my father's dwelling on a cold rainy night, after a long ride over the dreary moors.

On such occasions one of the family would help to disencumber him of his dreadnought and boots, while others brought him a pair of slippers, and made him a warm cup of tea. It was during these visits that he felt himself perfectly happy, and opened his whole soul to us, repeated, and even sang many of his admirable songs, and enchanted all who had the good fortune to be present with his manly, luminous observation, and artless manner. I never could fancy that Burns had ever followed the rustic occupation of the plough, because everything he said had a gracefulness and charm that was, in an extraordinary degree, engaging."

Burns's Contempt for Ostentatious Display.

A GIRVAN correspondent in his holiday rambles tells the following—

"Burns came to Maybole where 'Willie Niven,' his Kirkoswald schoolfellow had been doing his part for his book. Willie assembled a few friends at the King's Arms to do honour to the bard; and they spent a happy night together, Burns being the life and soul of the party. Comic verses flashed from his mouth to the astonishment of the company. Next morning he determined to hire from his host a certain poor hack mare, well known on the road from

Glasgow to Portpatrick as a beast that (to use his own words) could do little better than

‘ hoyte and hobble,
And wintle like a sawmont cobble.’ ”

Willie and his friends walked out of town before him for the purpose of taking leave at a particular spot; and before he came up they had by way of keeping up the style of the preceding evening, prepared a few mock heroics in which to bid him speed on his journey.

Burns received their salute with a subdued merriment; and when their spokesman had done, broke out with—

“What need of all this fine parade of verse, my friends? It would have been quite enough if you had said just this—

‘ Here comes Burns
On Rosinante ;
She’s d—— poor,
But he’s d—— canty !’ ”

And then he went on his way.

Admiration.

WHEN he visited Creehope-Linn, in Dumfries-shire, at every turn of the stream and bend of the wood he was called loudly upon to admire the shelving sinuosities of the burn, and the caverned splendour of its all but inaccessible banks. It was thought by those with him that he did not show rapture enough.

“I could not admire it more, sir,” said the poet, “if He who made it were to ask me to do it.”

Burns Priest-ridden for Once.

A WRITER in the "Ayrshire Post" is responsible for the following anecdote, which he states was received by him from a Mr. James Murdoch of Drumwhirn, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Burns was on a visit to Lord Kenmure at Kenmure Castle, and having passed the night there set out the next day on a journey to Gatehouse. It was "the wettest day that ever poured from the heavens," according to Mr. Murdoch's account; and when only two miles on his journey, Burns met with two clergymen who could not get across a foaming torrent which had been formed on the highway and rendered it utterly impassable. The author of "The Kirk's Alarm" kindly carried both of them across the stream, and deposited them safely on the farther side. "This," says Mr. Murdoch, "was the only time ever Burns was priest-ridden."

Sarcasm of Burns. |

BURNS often made extempore rhymes the vehicle of his sarcasm. Having heard a person of no very elevated rank talk loud and long of some aristocratic festivities in which he had the honour to mingle, Burns, when he was called upon for his song, chanted some verses, of which one has been preserved:—

"Of lordly acquaintance you boast,
And the dukes that you dined wi' yestreen,
Yet an insect's an insect at most
Though it crawl on the curl of a queen."

A Bumper of Brandy.

WHILE Burns was at Moffat once with Clarke, the composer,

the poet called for a bumper of brandy. "Oh, not a bumper," said the musician, "I prefer two small glasses."

"Two glasses?" cried Burns. "Why, you are like the lass in Kyle, who said she would rather be kissed twice bare-headed than once with her bonnet on."

Burns Cut by a Doctor.

DR. CLARKSON of Selkirk, along with two other gentlemen, were sitting in Veitch's Inn at Selkirk, when Ainslie and Burns arrived from Melrose. The day had been very wet, and they reached the inn "like twa drookit craws."

Soon after their arrival, the travellers sent Veitch in to ask the Doctor and his friends to take a glass with them.

The Doctor objected, and asked Mr. Veitch what like the men were?

Mr. Veitch said "he could hardly say; that the one spoke rather like a gentleman, but the other was a drover like chap." So they refused to admit them.

It was not till after three days that Clarkson discovered that he had "cut" Burns, and he never forgave himself for it till his dying day.

Burns and the French Language.

AN amusing anecdote is told of Burns's fondness for displaying his learning—a vanity not unprecedented in the annals of genius. In his school-days he had "a fortnight's French," and in a very brief period, by private study, attained so much

proficiency as to be able to read and understand any ordinary French book. The power to speak the language he does not appear to have had the opportunity to acquire, though in after life he was fond of the use of French words and phrases. Miss Chalmers once took him into the company of a French lady, and was not a little surprised that he attempted to converse with her in her own tongue. Their language however was mutually unintelligible, and Burns in the effort to make himself understood unfortunately offended the foreign lady with a clumsy compliment. He meant to tell her that she was a charming person, and delightful in conversation, but, in fact, told her that she was fond of speaking; to which the indignant dame replied, that it was quite as common for poets to be impertinent, as for women to be loquacious.

The Home-coming to Ellisland.

THE house is finished and furnished, and it must be taken possession of with accustomed rites and in due form. The road to it from the Isle, a short half-mile in length, is along a high, bush-fringed margin of the river; and over this always beautiful and henceforth classic ground Burns and his partner, arm-in-arm—he, muscular and swarthy, she, light, handsome, and fair—travelled with solemn pace and slow, preceded by a peasant girl carrying the Family Bible and a bowl of salt. With such propitiatory accompaniments Ellisland was reached, and Burns entered into the occupancy of what was comparatively to him “the great Babylon that he had built.”

Burns's Strength of Body.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM records the following—“I was very

young when I first saw Burns. Burns had just come to Nithsdale, and I think he appeared a shade more swarthy than he does in Nasmyth's picture, and at least ten years older than he really was at the time. His frame was very muscular and well-proportioned, though he had a short neck, and something of a ploughman's stoop; he was strong, and proud of his strength. I saw him one evening match himself with a number of masons; and, out of five-and-twenty practised hands, the most vigorous young men in the parish, there was only one that could lift the same weight as Burns."

Howlet Face.

BURNS one day visited his landlord, Mr. Miller, at Dalswinton House; and Miss Miller, in answer to some complimentary remark from the poet about her blooming looks, told him that she had been much less commended on the previous evening. One of the Lords of Justiciary from the Circuit Court at Dumfries happened to be dining with her father, and the gentlemen sat over their cups a considerable time after dinner. When they joined the ladies in the drawing-room, his lordship's visual organs were so much affected that, pointing to Miss Miller, he asked her father—

"Wha's yon howlet-faced thing i' the corner?"

Burns immediately pulled out his pencil and wrote on a slip of paper the following lines, which he handed to Miss Miller, saying—

"There's the answer you should send him."

"How daur ye ca' me 'howlet-face?'

Ye blear-e'd, wither'd spectre!

You only spied the keekin'-glass,

And there ye saw your picture!"

Sir Egerton Brydges Interviews Burns.

SIR E. BRYDGES thus relates an interview he had with Burns on the banks of the Nith:—

“I had always been a great admirer of his genius, and of many traits in his character, and I was aware that he was a person moody and somewhat difficult to deal with. I was resolved to keep in full consideration the irritability of his position in society. About a mile from his residence, on a bench under a tree, I passed a figure which, from the engraved portraits of him, I did not doubt was the poet; but I did not venture to address him. On arriving at his humble cottage, Mrs. Burns opened the door; she was the plain sort of humble woman she has been described. She ushered me into a neat apartment, and said that she would send for Burns, who was gone for a walk. In about half-an-hour he came, and my conjecture proved right. He was the person I had seen on the bench by the roadside. At first I was not entirely pleased with his countenance. I thought it had a sort of capricious jealousy, as if he was half inclined to treat me as an intruder. I resolved to bear it, and try if I could humour him. I let him choose his turn of conversation, but said a few words about the friend whose letter I had brought to him. It was now about four in the afternoon of an autumn day. While we were talking Mrs. Burns, as if accustomed to entertain visitors in this way, brought in a bottle of Scotch whisky, and set the table. I accepted the hospitality. I could not help observing the curious glance with which he watched me at the entrance of this signal of homely entertainment. He was satisfied: he filled our glasses—

Here's a health to auld Caledonia !’

The fire sparkled in his eye, and mine sympathetically met his. He shook my hand with warmth, and we were friends at once. Then we drank 'Erin for ever!' and the tear of delight burst from his eye. The fountain of his mind and his heart now opened at once, and flowed with abundant force almost till midnight."

To Mary in Heaven.

MRS. BURNS narrates that the third anniversary of the death of "Highland Mary" was spent by Burns as follows:—

"He spent that day, though labouring under cold, in the usual work of the harvest, and apparently in excellent spirits. But as the twilight deepened he appeared to grow very sad about something, and at length wandered out into the barn-yard, to which I, in my anxiety, followed him, entreating him in vain to observe that frost had set in, and to return to the fireside. On being again and again requested to do so, he promised compliance, but still remained where he was, striding up and down slowly and contemplating the sky, which was singularly clear and starry. At last I found him stretched on a mass of straw, with his eyes fixed on a beautiful planet 'that shone like another moon,' and prevailed on him to come in. He immediately on entering the house called for his desk, and wrote exactly as they now stand, with all the ease of one copying from memory—

'Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn, &c.'"

Though this was the version given by "Bonnie Jean" in all good faith, there are, to the students of Burns, weak points in it which have given rise to other and different theories.

Praying versus Fitches.

BURNS sometimes read books not always seen in people's hands on Sunday. Mrs. Burns checked this, when the bard laughingly replied—

“You'll not think me so good a man as Nancy Kelly (or Cullie) is a woman?”

“Indeed, no.”

“Then I'll tell you what happened this morning. When I took a walk this morning by the banks of the Nith, I heard Nancy Kelly praying long before I came till her. I walked on, and before I returned I saw her helping herself to an armful of my fitches.” Nancy kept a cow.

The Blacksmith of Roads.

THE following anecdote was told by a son of the blacksmith referred to—

“When Burns was residing in Ellisland he used to get the most of his blacksmith-work done at a place called Roads, near the village of Dalswinton. The smith's name was Kilpatrick, and he also kept a little public-house. On one occasion, while visiting the ‘smiddy,’ which was as usual filled with a number of the village gossips, ‘Roads’ (as the blacksmith was generally called) challenged Burns to compose an epitaph to be placed on his tombstone.

Burns, in a jocular manner, replied, “It would be an easy matter to do that. Just tell them to put on it—

‘Below this sod lies drucken Road—
A man that ne'er lo'ed to drink water;
The canty jill aye kittled his mill,
An' made his tongue gang clitter-clatter.’”

The Sacrifice of the Tappit-Hen.

A GENTLEMEN who had recently returned from the East Indies, where he had made a large fortune, which he showed no great alacrity about spending, was, it seems, one day of opinion that his company had had enough of wine rather sooner than *they* came to that conclusion; he offered another bottle in feeble and hesitating terms, and remained dallying with the corkscrew, as if in hopes that some one would interfere and prevent further effusion of Bourdeaux.

"Sir," said Burns, losing his temper, and betraying in his mood something of the old rusticity. "Sir, you have been in Asia, and for aught I know on the Mount of Moriah, and you seem to hang over your tappit-hen as remorsefully as Abraham did over his son Isaac. Come, sir, to the sacrifice!"

Burns's Aptness in Quoting Scripture.

ON one occasion, Nance Kelly and the bard were sitting in the spence of her house, when the former turned the conversation on her favourite topic—religion. Burns, from whatever motive sympathised with the matron, and quoted so much Scripture that she was fairly astonished, and staggered in the opinion she formerly entertained. When she went ben, she said to her husband—

"Oh! David Cullie, hoo they have wranged that man; for I think he has mair o' the Bible aff his tongue than Mr. Inglis (Nance's minister) himsel'."

The bard enjoyed the compliment; and almost the first thing he communicated to his wife, on her arrival, was "the lift he got from auld Nance."

Burns and Miss Deborah Davies.

ONE day when the poet was at the pretty watering-place of Moffat, two ladies rode past—one tall and portly, and the other, "the bonnie wee thing" of his muse.

A friend asked him why God had made Miss Davies so little while her companion was so large, and he at once produced the epigram—

" Ask why God made the gem so small,
An' why so huge the granite;
Because God meant mankind should set
The higher value on it."

This impromptu was afterwards written by the poet on a window pane of the Black Bull Inn at Moffat, but the piece of glass which it emblazoned has long since disappeared.

The Waiter and his Sweetheart.

REV. MR. PAUL tells us that one day having sat down to dinner at an inn while on his way from Ellisland to Mauchline, with a pleasant party, Burns was resolved to consecrate the evening to conviviality. The dinner was near a close,

and the wit of the bard was beginning to flash. He was struck with admiration of the waiter, who was a handsome, well-dressed, active, obliging young man. He remarked to the company that he had hardly ever seen one of a more prepossessing demeanour. One of the maid-servants assisted in taking away. She had a rencounter with the waiter in the lobby, a gentle struggle took place, and the company were diverted at the noise of the contest, which seemed to proceed from an endeavour on the part of the waiter to ravish a kiss from his sweetheart. In the midst of the frolic, the young man instantaneously dropped down dead at the feet of his mistress. The sensibility of the bard was touched to the quick by the distressing catastrophe, his wit ceased to sparkle, and he maintained a gloomy silence for the remainder of the evening.

/ Strength and Activity of Burns.

His personal strength was united to great activity; he could move a twenty stone sack of meal without much apparent effort, and load a cart with bags of corn in the time, one of his neighbours said, that other men were talking about it. A mason was hewing him a stone for a cheese-press, and Burns took pleasure as a side was squared to turn over the huge mass unaided. A large pebble is still pointed out at Ellisland, as his putting-stone; and though no living man in Nithsdale perhaps can poise it in the air, the tradition proves the popular belief in his great strength. He delighted in feats of rural activity and skill; he loved to draw the straightest furrow in his fields, to sow the largest quantity of seed-corn

of any farmer in the dale in a day, mow the most rye-grass and clover in ten hours of exertion, and stook to the greatest number of reapers. In this he sometimes met with his match. After a hard strife, on the harvest field, with a fellow husbandman, in which the Poet was equalled :

"Robert," said his rival, "I'm no sae far behind this time, I'm thinking?"

"John," said he in a whisper, "you're behind in something yet: I made a sang while I was stooking."

Burns's Habit of Reading.

A COUNTRY woman in Dunscore, who had seen Burns riding slowly among the hills reading, once remarked, "That's surely no a good man, for he has aye a book in his hand!"

Burns in Dumfries.

LOCKHART says "he was the standing marvel of the place; his toasts, his jokes, his epigrams, his songs, were the daily food of conversation and scandal; and he, open and careless, and thinking he did no great harm in saying and singing what many of his superiors had not the least objection to hear and applaud, soon began to be considered, among the local admirers of the good old King and his minister, as the most dangerous of all the apostles of sedition, and to be shunned accordingly."

Burns's House in Dumfries.

THE bard's house was situated in Mill Street, and was of a good order. His eldest son's testimony given to Chambers was as follows:—"They always had a maid-servant, and sat in their parlour. That apartment, together with two bedrooms, was well furnished and carpeted; and when good company assembled, which was often the case, the hospitable board which they surrounded was of a patrician mahogany. There was much rough comfort in the house, not to have been found in those of ordinary citizens; for, besides the spoils of smugglers, the poet received many presents of game and country produce from the rural gentlefolk, besides occasional barrels of oysters from Hill, Cunningham, and other friends in town, so that he possibly was as much envied by some of his neighbours as he has since been pitied by the general body of his countrymen."

Burns Amongst his Family.

BURNS delighted to be beside his family. Mr. Gray, one of the teachers in the Academy, Dumfries, says:—"He spent many a delightful hour in directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the English poets from Shakespeare to Gray; or storing his mind with examples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of our most celebrated English historian. I would ask any person of common candour, if employments like these are consistent with habitual drunkenness."

Burns and the Education of his Children.

THE following interesting letter to the Provost, Bailies and Town Council of Dumfries, shows the sound appreciation Burns had of a good education for his children :—

“Gentlemen,—The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, to give my young ones that education I wish at the High School, fees which a stranger pays will bear hard upon me. Some years ago your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary burgess. Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far as to put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town in the schools? If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honour to be, gentlemen, &c.,—Robert Burns.

“That I may not appear altogether unworthy of the favour, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done for a branch of your revenue, the two pennies exigible for foreign ale vended within your limits. In this rather neglected article of your income, I am ready to show that, within these last few weeks, my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of ten pounds, and in this, too, I am the only one of the Excise (except Mr. Mitchell, whom you pay for this trouble) who took the least concern in the business.”

Burns and the Dumfries Library.

A PUBLIC LIBRARY was opened in Dumfries about 1792, and Burns, who aided in establishing it, was admitted a free member on 5th March, 1793. In September of the same year, he presented four books to the Library—"Humphrey Clinker," "Julia de Roubigne," "Knox's History of the Reformation," and "De Lolme on the British Constitution." The last named volume bore the following holograph inscription:—

"Mr. Burns presents this book to the Library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty—until they find a better.—R. B."

Burns and the Soldier.

WILLIAM JOLLY, H.M. Inspector of Schools, in his "Burns at Mossgiel," tells the following anecdote illustrative of the kindly geniality of the poet:—

George Patrick, a brother of old Willie Patrick, once a herd at Mossgiel, had become a soldier, and after the birth of his first-born, a girl, met his wife at Dumfries to have the child baptised. He knew no one in the town, however, and how was it to be done? Remembering that Burns was then settled in Dumfries, he called on him and was received with the utmost cordiality for "auld lang syne." After hearing his difficulty, the poet replied that it would not be a hard job to get the child christened, as he knew a good fellow of a minister, as fond of a dram as himself, who would be ready

to do it. Burns at once arranged the matter, and the ceremony was duly performed, the grateful parents naming the infant Jean, after the poet's wife. The daughter, so baptised, died a few years ago, aged 82.

Humanity of Burns.

BURNS did not confine his love for man to words, but many were the deeds of kindness he did. An eye-witness has said, "That returning home to his house in the Wee Vennel, Dumfries, one stormy wet night after dark, he discovered a poor, half-witted, street-strolling beggar woman, well known about the town, half-naked, drenched and shivering, huddled together, almost insensible, on his own door-step.

In those days there was no shelter of a police-office to which such a helpless vagrant could be removed, nor was there any house open at the moment to which she could be carried but his own. Mrs. Burns might, perhaps, be excused for hesitating to receive such an inmate, even for the night; but remonstrance was in vain. The insensible outcast, motionless, presumably unconscious, was carefully lifted in, and housed and sheltered under the Poet's hospitable roof till morning, when, not without breakfast, we may be sure, she was enabled to pursue her way.

The Threading of the Needle.

MRS. MONTAGU, who dined with Burns at Arbigland, says of him that he was witty; drank as others drank; and was long

in coming to the tea-table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy about something; I was working a flower. The poet sat down beside me, talked of the beauty of what I was imitating, and put his hand so near the work, that I said "Well, take it, and do a bit yourself."

"O ho," said he, "you think my hand is unsteady with wine. I cannot work a flower, madam, but——," he pulled the thread out of the needle, and re-threaded it in a moment: "Can a tipsy man do that?"

He talked to me of his children, more particularly of his eldest son, and called him a promising boy, "And yet, madam," he said, with a sarcastic glance of his eye, "I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune."

Burns and the Astrologer.

MRS. MARION HUNTER, who well remembered Burns, narrated the following anecdote to Waddell, who gives it in his edition of Burns's Works:—

She remembered distinctly "that when he (Burns) came to Muirkirk on one of his professional visits as an Exciseman, 'a great, strong, deaf-and-dumb man, that spaed fortunes and could do naething but blutter and gurl,' was at one of the public-houses in that village, practising his art and fleecing the natives. 'Mr. Burns,' on being informed of this worthy's presence in good faith by the inhabitants, expressed the greatest pleasure at the prospect of an interview; and, with two friends, repaired at once to the upstairs-room where the astrologer was seated. Having called for some refreshment, at a small table in the other end of the room, and having duly discussed it, first one and then the other of our author's

friends, by preconcerted arrangement, retired, and left him alone with the soothsayer. He, thereupon, indignantly struck the table, and demanded with vehemence whether the folks about Muirkirk were accustomed to treat strangers, after such an unfriendly fashion, by leaving them thus uncivilly to discharge the reckoning? No reply having been vouchsafed by the only other party in the room, the demand was repeated in a louder and more indignant tone—'blutter and gurl' being now the rejoinder, but no articulate syllable. Burns, then advancing with an incredulous air, inquired how his companion was so deaf or dumb or both? Did he not hear him? Could he not speak? Still no articulate reply; on which the indignant Exciseman 'gied him a clank on ae side o' the head wi' ae han', and keppit him on the ither side wi' the ither han', and then a ding on the back o' the head after a'. Then the dumb man opened his mouth, and loused his tongue, and swore like ony dragoon. Ye never heard as he swore! But a' was na by. Burns syne took him by the neck aneth the chafts, and gied his napkin a bit twist wi' his fingers, and haurld him to the door o' the room, and pat his fit till the spaeman's back, and gart him shine down the stair wi' a hurl!' This cleared the neighbourhood of one nuisance for a year, 'for the creatur' took to some ruined chapel about the place for that nicht, and the laddies chased him awa' next mornin'."

A Black Character.

THAN Burns, perhaps, no man more severely inflicted the castigation of reproof. The following anecdote will illustrate this fact. The conversation one night at the King's Arms

Inn, Dumfries, turning on the death of a townsman, whose funeral was to take place on the following day :—

“By the by,” said one of the company, addressing himself to Burns, “I wish you would lend me your black coat for the occasion, my own being rather out of repair.”

“Having myself to attend the same funeral,” answered Burns, “I am sorry that I cannot lend you my sables; but I can recommend a most excellent substitute. Throw your character over your shoulders; that will be the blackest coat you ever wore in your life-time.”

The Solemn League and Covenant.

ON hearing a gentleman sneering at the Solemn League and Covenant, and calling it ridiculous and fanatical, the poet eyed him across the table, and exclaimed :—

“The Solemn League and Covenant
Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears—
But it sealed Freedom’s sacred cause :
If thou’rt a slave, indulge thy sneers.”

Tipplin’ Jamie Quin.

EVEN the wandering poor were to the poet a heavy tax; he allowed no one to go past his door without a halfpenny or a handful of meal. He was kind to such helpless creatures as were weak in mind and saunter harmlessly about. A poor half-mad creature—the Madge Wildfire, it is said, of Scott—

always found a mouthful ready for her at the bard's fireside; nor was he unkind to a crazy and tippling prodigal named Quin.

"Jamie," said the poet one day as he gave him a penny, "you should pray to be turned from the evil of your ways; you are ready to run now to melt that into whisky."

"Turn," said Jamie, who was a wit in his way, "I wish some one would turn me into the worm o' Will Hyslop's whisky still, that the drink might run continually through me."

"Well said, Jamie," answered the poet, "you shall have a glass of whisky once a week for that if you come sober for it."

A friend rallied Burns for indulging such creatures.

"You don't understand," said he, "they are poets; they have the madness of the muse, and all they want is the inspiration—a mere trifle!"

Thoughtful for Others.

HE was not a bustling active gauger, nor did he love to put himself foremost in adventures which he knew would end in distress to many. One clear moonlight morning, on being awakened by the clang of horses at a gallop, he started up, looked out at the window, and to his wife, who asked eagerly what it was, he whispered:—

"It is smugglers, Jean."

"Robert, then I fear ye'll be to follow them?" she said:—

"And so I would," he answered, "were it Will Gunnion or Edgar Wright; but it's poor Brandyburn, who has a wife and three weans, and is no doing owre weel in his farm. What can I do?"

She pulled him in from the window.

The Muckle Black Kist.

JEAN DUNN, a suspected trader in the parish of Kirkpatrick-Durham, observing Burns and one of his brother Excisemen, named Robertson, drawing near her house on the morning of a fair, slipped out by the back-door, as if to evade their scrutiny, leaving in the cabin her attendant for the day, and a little girl, her daughter.

"Has there been any brewing for the fair here to-day," demanded our poet, on entering.

"O no, sir," said the servant, "we hae nae licence for that."

"That's no true," exclaimed the child, "the muckle black kist is fu' o' the bottles o' yill my mother sat up a' nicht brewing for the fair."

"Does that bird speak," said Robertson, pointing to one hanging in a cage.

"There's no use for another speaking bird in this house," said Burns, "while that little lassie is to the fore. We are in a hurry just now; but as we return from the fair we'll examine the muckle black kist."

As a matter of course, when they did return, the witnessing bottles had vanished from the chest.

"Kate, are you Mad?"

THE late Professor Gillespie, of St. Andrews, remembered seeing Burns on a fair day in August, 1790, at the village of Thornhill, where a poor woman, named Kate Watson, had taken up the publican's trade for that occasion without a licence.



"I saw the poet," he says, "enter her door, and anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain grey-beard and barrel which, to my personal knowledge, contained the contraband commodities our bard was in search of. A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the fore-finger, brought Kate to the doorway, and I was near enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered:—

'Kate, are you mad? Don't you know that the Supervisor and I will be upon you in the course of forty minutes. Good-bye t'ye at present.'"

I had reason to know that the friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor widow from a fine of several pounds for committing a quarterly offence, by which the revenue of the country was probably subject to an annual loss of five shillings.

Kindly Consideration.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM tells us that one day the poet and a brother officer entered the shop of a widow woman in Dunscore, and made a seizure of smuggled tobacco.

"Jenny," said the bard, "I expected that this would be the upshot."

"Here, Lewars, take note of the number of rolls as I count them.

Now, Jock, did ye ever hear an auld wife numbering her threads before check-reels were invented? Thou's ane, and thou's no ane, and thou's ane an' out. Listen."

As he handed out the rolls he went on with the humorous reckoning, all the while dropping every other roll into Janet's lap. Lewars made the desired memorandum with commendable gravity, seeing, as if he did not see, the considerate conduct of his colleague.

Burns's Dislike of Soldiers.

MRS. MONTAGUE, a friend of Allan Cunningham's, related the following to him:—

"When I was at Arbigland, in 1793, I was introduced to Burns. His conversation pleased me much, and I saw him often. I was at a ball given by the Caledonian Hunt in Dumfries, and had stood up as the partner of a young officer in the dance, when the whisper of 'there's Burns!' ran through the assembly. I looked round, and there he was; his bright dark eyes full upon me. I shall never forget the look; it was one that gave me no pleasure. He soon left the meeting. I saw him next day. He would have passed me, but I spoke. I took his arm, and said, 'Come, you must see me home.'

'Gladly, madam,' said he; 'but I'll not go down the plain-stanes, lest I have to share your company with some of those epauletted puppies with whom the street is full. Come this way.'"

The Poet Penitent.

MRS. HAUGH, who knew the bard well to the last, said that Burns drank from circumstances rather than inclination. Her husband now and then, as he went out by day-light in the morning to his work, met Burns coming home. The poet never passed him without a word or two, expressing his sorrow for the life he was leading, such as:—

"O, Mr. Haugh, you are a happy man; you have risen from a refreshing sleep, and left a kind wife and children, while I am returning a poor self-condemned wretch to mine."

At whatever hour he came home, or in whatever condition he returned, he always spoke kindly to his wife; reproachful words were never heard between them.

A Contrite Heart; or Burns a Praying Man.

BURNS was deeply conscious of his own faults, and was ever ready to deplore them and condemn himself. A touching incident bearing on this is recorded in the edition of his works, edited by Hogg and Motherwell. It was related by a boon companion of Burns's, and occurred after a night which they and others had spent together. This friend, who had shared the same room with Burns, had gone to bed, and was supposed by Burns to be asleep. He was lying awake, however, and, with partially closed eyes, was observing the poet's movements. He saw him walk restlessly about the room for a while, and then throw himself on his knees with his face leaning on his arms, which were across a chair. In this position he began to pray audibly, and by degrees became so fervid in his appeals for mercy and forgiveness for his transgressions that his friend, stricken with awe, crept out of bed, and went down also upon his knees. Burns neither heard nor saw, and went on in an agony of penitence and supplication. No man (his friend said afterwards) could have prayed with such passion, with such contrition, with such a realisation of God's presence, unless prayer had been a habit with him. When at last Burns stopped and looked about, and found his friend on his knees beside him, he shook his head, and seemed not pleased that he had been observed and heard.

Burns at Ryedale; Death in the Cup.

ONE day after dinner at Ryedale, Burns wrote the following lines on a goblet with his diamond. Lyme, whom Burns thus complimented, would seem to have been less affected with the compliment than with defacing his crystal service, for he threw the goblet behind the fire. We are not told what the poet thought; but it is said that Brown, of "Stamp-office Johnny," snatched the goblet out of the fire uninjured, and kept it as a relique till his death :—

There's death in the cup—sae beware !
Nay, more—there is danger in touching ;
But wha can avoid the fell snare ?
The man and his wine's sae bewitching !

Road to Ruin.

MRS. HYSLOP, daughter of Mr. Geddes of Leith, happened to meet Burns one day in the streets of Dumfries, and was affected by his appearance. He stooped more than was his wont; his dress, about which he used to be rather nice, was disordered and shabby, and he bore on his face the stamp of internal sorrow. The meeting was cordial and warm. On parting he wrung her brother, who accompanied her, earnestly by the hand, turned half-away from him and said:—

"I am going to ruin as fast as I can; the best I can do is to go consistently."

An Epitaph.

A MELANCHOLY person of the name of Glendinning having taken away his own life, was interred at a place called "The Old Chapel," close beside Dumfries. Dr. Copland Hutchison, a friend of Allan Cunningham, informed him that, one day he happened to be walking out that way, he saw Burns with his foot on the grave, his hat on his knee, and paper laid on his hat, on which he was writing. He then took the paper, thrust it with his finger into the red mould of the grave, and went away. The following were the lines pencilled on the paper :—

Earth'd up here lies an imp o' hell,
Planted by Satan's dibble—
Poor silly wretch, he's damn'd himsel'
To save the Lord the trouble.

A Nine Hours' Sitting.

A WELL known Glasgow merchant, and an octogenarian, Mr. John Patterson, writing to Colin Rae-Brown in 1858, says :—

"During the holidays of 1795, my father was good enough to ask me to mount my pony and accompany him on a visit to his brother in Dumfries-shire. As we reached the George Inn, Dumfries, we saw a gentlemen leaning on the threshold, to whom my father called out, 'Ah, Burns, I am glad to see you!' The poet instantly rushed down the steps, clasped my father's hand, and expressed himself delighted at the meeting. Dinner was ordered at four o'clock, and Burns accepted of an invitation to join us, and to get his friend Dr. Maxwell to be one of the party.

Accordingly at the time named we sat down, my father at the top, Dr. Maxwell at the foot, and the Bard and I facing each other from the sides of the table. That sitting lasted upwards of nine hours! During all that time, at all events after dessert, I felt myself nailed to my seat, for the first time in my life; amazed and charmed, greedily listening to the conversation of three intelligent and accomplished men, while fastened down by the glamour of the bard's magnificent eyes! From that day to this, the charms of that glorious night have never left me."

The Shady Side of the Street.

LOCKHART records an anecdote furnished to him by David MacCulloch, son of the Laird of Ardwall:—

"He was seldom more grieved than when riding into Dumfries one fine summer's evening to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who, on his proposing to him to cross the street, said:—

'Nay, nay, my young friend——, that's all over now,' and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:—

'His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow;
 His suld ane looked better than mony ane's new;
 But now he let's 't wear ony way it will hing,
 And casts himsel' dowie upon the corn-bing.
 Oh, were we young, as we ance hae been,
 We suld hae been galloping down on yon green,
 And linking it ower the lilywhite lea,
And werena my heart light I wad dee.'

It was little in Burn's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He immediately, after citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived, with a bowl of his usual potation, and bonnie Jean's singing of some verses which he had recently composed."

The Poet's Pride.

IN a characteristic letter addressed to Clarinda, bearing date 25th June, 1794, the bard refers to his old friend Ainslie as having become distant in his manner, and then refers to his own pride in the following words:—

"Though fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach now, as she did then, when he (Ainslie) first honoured me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever, and, when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to."

Burns and the Paraphrases.

SIR JOHN RICHARDSON, the celebrated Arctic explorer, was born in Dumfries, and among the reminiscences of the future hero's early years in that town we find one specially interesting anecdote.

Robert Burns was then residing at Dumfries, and every Sunday evening he spent some hours at the elder Richardson's house, where, at times, he occupied himself by selecting for

John Richardson portions not of his own poems, but of the metrical psalms and the paraphrases used in public worship, that the boy might commit them to memory. Amongst them was the sixty-sixth paraphrase, beginning—

“How bright these glorious spirits shine!”

Burns could hardly wish to be remembered in a more pleasing attitude than pointing out such lines to a child six years of age, and bidding him commit them to memory.

“A Slice of his Constitution.”

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD, in writing to the Earl of Buchan regarding Burns and himself, says—in reference to the fate of that extraordinary man [Burns]. “Remember Burns” has been the watchword of my friends. I do remember Burns; but I am not Burns; neither have I his fire to fan or to quench; nor his passions to control! Where then is my merit if I make a peaceful voyage on a smooth sea, and with no mutiny on board? To a lady (I have it from herself), who remonstrated with him on his danger from drink, and the pursuits of some of his associates, he replied—

“Madam, they would not thank me for my company if I did not drink with them; I must give them a slice of my constitution.”

How much to be regretted that he did not give them thinner slices of his constitution, that it might have lasted longer!

“Watty and Meg.”

BURNS admired Wilson’s “Watty and Meg” greatly. On

one occasion, Andrew Bishop, a well known ballad-crier, was going along crying, "'Watty and Meg,' &c., by Burns." The bard was writing at his desk, and exclaimed—

"O, Andrew, that's a d——d lie; but I would have been very proud to have acknowledged it."

Burns and Punning.

BURNS disliked puns, and was seldom civil to those who uttered them.

"After all, a pun is an innocent thing," said one of his companions.

"Innocent," said Burns, "No, sir; it is committing 'a deed without a name' with the language."

Coat and Waistcoat.

THE following paragraph about Burns is copied from an old London newspaper, "The Albion and Evening Advertiser," dated May 23, 1801.

"*Bon mot* OF THE LATE ROBERT BURNS.—This singular character, it is well known, was addicted to the bottle. A physician who attended him in his last illness, remonstrating with him on this head, assured him that 'the coat of his stomach was entirely gone.' The merry bard declared that, if that was the case, he would go on drinking to the end of the chapter, 'for, if the coat was all gone, it was not worth while carrying about the waistcoat.'"

The Deil in his Pouch.

THE following anecdote respecting Burns during his last days is given on the authority of Mr. Drummond of the "Perthshire Advertiser," and is sufficiently interesting to be related :

"During his sojourn at Brow, the poet's health was so much reduced that he lived almost entirely on port wine. Being off duty, his poor salary of £50 was now reduced to £35. In these sad circumstances, the poor poet's little stock of port wine and cash ran out simultaneously. In a state bordering on despair, he went to the little inn at Clarencefield, the landlord of which was one of his devoted admirers, and, laying down an empty bottle on the bar counter, asked for a bottle of port wine. When the wine was handed to him, he whispered to the landlord that the deil had got into his pouch and was sole possessor; but taking his watch seal in his hand, tendered it to the landlord, and began to unfasten it.

The landlady observed the motion, and gave a stamp with her foot, while the landlord pushed the poet towards the door, and, when they passed the bar window, the landlord had his arm round the poet's waist, and floods of tears rushed from both the men's eyes."

Nearing the End.

THERE is a fine story touching the last day of the great minstrel. It was a week day, but the street, where he lived in Dumfries, was crowded with poor working men, many of them weeping, and when a stranger said to one of them in wonder—"What's the matter?" he sobbed out, "Robbie Burns is deein' sir—Robbie Burns is deein'." And when one

in the room with him drew the curtain against the sun, thinking it might hurt his eyes, he moaned, "Do not shut the sun out; I shall soon see him no more."

The Grave of Burns.

IN the spring after Burns died, Thomas Nimmo, a native of Carnwath, having received his discharge from the army in England, was travelling home with a comrade. Passing through Dumfries, they inquired the way to St. Michael's Churchyard to visit the poet's grave. Following a footpath through the wilderness of ornaments, which deck death in that famous burying-ground, they looked around for a stone to tell them where he slept. Not finding anything of the sort, they made up to a female in deep mourning, who was sitting on the ground a little farther on.

Nimmo thus addressed her: "Mistress, we are strangers, and would feel obliged if you could show us the grave of Burns."

Pointing to the narrow mound at her feet, and bursting into tears, she replied—

"That, soldiers, is his grave, and I am his widow."

The poor fellows felt hurt at having intruded on her in such circumstances, apologised for their abruptness, tendered their simple but heartfelt condolence, and went on their way.

This would have been a good subject for a painter: Jean Armour at the grave of Burns, while yet no monument marked the spot; and it might have been called "Sorrow weeping over genius," which had been consigned to an early and too premature grave.

Emerson on Burns.

AT the Burns' Centenary Dinner at Boston in 1859, Emerson concluded his speech as follows:—

"Yet how true a poet is he; and the poet, too, of poor men, of grey hodden, and the guernsey coat, and the blouse. He has given voice to all the experiences of common life; he has endeared the farm-house and cottage, patches and poverty, beans and barley; ale the poor man's wine; hardship, the fear of debt, the dear society of weans and wife; brothers and sisters, proud of each other, knowing so few, and finding amends for want and obscurity in books and thought. What a love of nature, and shall I say it middle-class nature. Not great like Goethe in the stars, or like Byron on the ocean, or like Moore in the luxurious East; but in the lonely landscape which the poor see around them; bleak leagues of pasture and stubble, ice, and sleet, and rain, and snow-clothed brooks; birds, hares, field-mice, thistles, and heather, which he daily knew. How many 'Bonnie Doons,' and 'John Anderson my Joes,' and 'Auld Lang-synes,' all around the earth have his verses been applied to! And his love songs still woo and melt the youths and maids; the farm work, the country holiday, the fishing coble, are still his debtors to-day. And as he was thus the poet of poor, anxious, cheerful, working humanity, so he had the language of low life. He grew up in a rural district speaking a patois unintelligible to all but natives, and he has made that lowland Scotch a doric dialect of fame. It is the only example in history of a language made classic by the genius of a single man. But more than this, he had that secret of genius to draw from the bottom of society the strength of its speech, and astonish the ears of the polite with these artless words, better than art, and filtered of all offence through his beauty.

It seemed odious to Luther that the devil should have all the best tunes; he would bring them into the churches; and Burns knew how to take from fairs and gypsies, blacksmiths and drovers, the speech of the market and street, and clothe it with melody. But I am detaining you too long. The memory of Burns—I am afraid heaven and earth have taken too good care of it, to leave us anything to say. The west winds are murmuring it. Open the windows behind you, and hearken for the incoming tide what the waves say of it. The doves perching always on the eaves of the stone chapel opposite, may know something about it. Every name in broad Scotland keeps his fame bright. The memory of Burns—every man's, and boy's and girl's head carries snatches of his songs, and can say them by heart, and what is strangest of all, never learned them from a book, but from mouth to mouth. The wind whispers them, the birds whistle them, the corn, barley, and bulrushes hoarsely rustle them; nay, the music-boxes at Geneva are framed and toothed to play them; the hand-organs of the Savoyards in all cities repeat them, and the chimes of bells ring them in the spires. They are the property and the solace of mankind."

A Relic.

AN English gentleman visiting the widow of Robert Burns at Dumfries, was exceedingly anxious to obtain some relic of the bard, as he called it; that is, some scrap of his handwriting, or any other little object which could be considered a memorial of the deceased.

Mrs. Burns replied to all his entreaties, that she had already given away everything of that kind that was

remarkable, or which she could think of parting with; that, indeed, she had no relic to give him. Still the visitant insisted, and still Mrs. Burns declared her inability to satisfy him. At length, pushed by his good-humoured entreaties to very extremity, she as good-humouredly said—

“Well, sir, unless you take myself, I really can think of no other relic (relict) of him that is in my power to give or yours to receive.”

Of course this closed the argument.

Hew Ainslie and “Bonnie Jean.”

LATTO, in his Memoir of Hew Ainslie, gives the following account of Hew's visit to Burns's widow. When Hew landed at the cottage, Mrs. Burns “was overrun with visitors, but the stranger introducing himself, she received him in her kindly, motherly way. His manner was very winning when not oppressed by a sense of condescending patronage, and of that Jean had none. They got ‘unco pack and thick together’ in less time than it takes to tell it, and, of course, the dead poet formed the staple of the ‘twa-handed crack.’ She communicated to him a good deal that has now passed from a usually retentive memory.

‘Four oors’ was just approaching, and the venerable dame, proceeding to ‘mask’ her tea, courteously invited him to stay and take with her a refreshing cup. They talked of relic-hunters, and she professed herself utterly a-weary of them and their pertinacity. She spoke almost cheerily of the

'roup' of their furniture after the great man's death, and of the 'awfu' prices realized by the eight-day clock, dilapidated 'chairs, pans, griddles, &c.'

'But oh!' she said, jokingly, 'if they were to be sell't now, they wad bring twenty times mair.'

Hew wanted to take a short walk in some of the bard's haunts, and she immediately looked for a shawl to accompany him.

'I'm thinkin',' remarked our young man, 'that can hardly be the shawl ye got frae George Thomson?'

'No quite,' was her simple reply, 'that wad need to ha'e been weel hained to last sae lang. It's sax-an'-thretty years sin' he made me that present.'

They walked together to Lincluden Abbey, I think—at anyrate to a ruin—and she stood for a moment on a certain sheltered and lovely spot.

'It was just here,' she observed, 'that my man aften paused, and, I believe, made up mony a poem an' sang ere he cam' in to write it down. He was never fractious—aye gude-natured and kind baith to the bairns and to me.'

Hew felt then, as he did long afterwards, that Jean, of all the women in the world, was the one specially fitted to be the poet's life-long companion. She was indulgent, patient, affectionate, gentle, good, and, above all, most forgiving. When they returned from the trip, Ainslie proposed taking his immediate departure, but, before leaving, grasping her hand, he said—

'I wad like weel, ere I gae, if ye wad permit me, to kiss the cheek of Burns's faithfu' Jean, to be a reminder to me o' this meetin' when I am far awa'.'

She laughed, held up her face to him, an' said—'Aye, lad, an' welcome.' So he printed a kiss on her still unwithered lips, and that was the last he saw of Jean Armour."

“Bonnie Jean.”

CHAMBERS records the following, which illustrates the depth of the love of Mrs. Burns, and how careful she was to cast the mantle of prudence over her husband's name. The daughter of the bard, born in March, 1791, and who was afterwards Mrs. Thomson, was brought home to the house of Burns, and taken charge of by Mrs. Burns. The babe was soon after found by Jean's father in the same cradle with a child of her own, and drew from him the surprised enquiry if she had again had twins, when she quietly answered that the second baby was one of whom she was taking temporary charge for a sick friend. She brought up the little girl to womanhood, with an unvarying kindness of demeanour which created a filial degree of attachment.

NEAR the close of Mrs. Burns's life, the Misses Begg, nieces of the poet, resided with her in the well-known house in Dumfries. A message-boy called at the house one day, and for some time was engaged with Mrs. Burns. When his business was finished, he lingered about the door as if something were still upon his mind. Miss Begg asked him if he wished anything further.

“Oh,” he said, “if it's no a faut, I would like to see Bonnie Jean.”

“Bonnie Jean!” replied Miss Begg, “you have been speak-to her for the last quarter-of-an-hour.”

With a look of ineffable disappointment, he said—“Is that Bonnie Jean?” and went away.

Alas! that youngster forgot that time whitens the hair, and writes wrinkles on the brow, and effaces the marks of

beauty from the cheek. But to Burns himself [she was Bonnie Jean to the last, and Bonnie Jean she will continue while the memory of the poet is cherished.

Grave of Burns's Father in Alloway Kirkyard.

NEAR the gate of the churchyard surrounding the ruin, and in which

“The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,”

is the grave of Burns's father. It is marked by a plain monumental stone, erected at the cost of the poet, and inscribed with a tender and touching epitaph, the effusion of his nicely-discriminating pen, and deeply imbued with filial affection and regard. It is as follows:—

“O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious reverence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the generous friend.

The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
‘For even his failings leaned to virtue's side.’”

Clarinda.

THE editor of Kay's Portraits gives the following account of a personal interview with Clarinda:—

“We found her sitting in the parlour (24 Feb., 1837) with

some papers on the table. Her appearance at first betrayed a little of that langour and apathy which attend age and solitude; but the moment she comprehended the object of our visit, her countenance, which even yet retains the lineaments of what Clarinda may be supposed to have been, became animated and intelligent.

‘That,’ said she, rising up and pointing to an engraving over the mantel-piece, ‘is a likeness of my relative (Lord Craig), about whom you have been enquiring. He was the best friend I ever had.’

After a little further conversation about his lordship, she directed our attention to a picture of Burns, by Horsburgh after Taylor, on the opposite wall of the apartment.

‘You will know who that is—it was presented to me by Constable & Co. for having simply declared what I knew to be true—that the likeness was good.’

We spoke of the correspondence betwixt the Poet and Clarinda, at which she smiled, and pleasantly remarked on the great change which the lapse of so many years had produced on her personal appearance. Indeed, my observations respecting Burns seemed to afford her pleasure, and she laughed at a little anecdote we told of him which she never before heard. Having prolonged our intrusion to the limits of courtesy, and conversed on various topics, we took leave of the venerable lady, highly gratified by the interview. In youth, Clarinda must have been about the middle size. Burns, she said, if still living, would have been much about her own age, probably a few months older.”

“Lassie wi’ the Lint White Locks.”

THE young lady who was the subject of the “Lassie wi’ the

Lint White Locks," and to whom he says, in a letter to Mr. Thompson, we are indebted for some of his best songs, was a Miss J—— L——. She was then young and beautiful, and possessed of all the gaiety and vivacity which commonly accompany such charms. Although she had many wooers, yet none were fortunate enough to win her affections, or awaken a kindred passion within her bosom. At length a military officer paid his addresses to the lovely "Chloris," and "was a thriving wooer." With him she eloped and was married. A female relative of Burns, who resided with him at Ellisland, had frequent opportunities of seeing Miss L. at Burns's house. That person now resides in Mauchline, and was lately much surprised to discover in the person of an old woman whom she invited to a night's lodging, the identical "Lassie wi' the Lint White Locks."

Burns's Blue-eyed Lassie.

JEANIE was just 17; of sweet, winning manners, with waving, golden tresses and rosy cheeks; but above all a pair of laughing blue eyes. Burns was charmed with her artless manners, and particularly with her "twa sweet een;" his susceptible heart was fired with admiration for the daughter of his host.

The next morning at breakfast he presented her with the song which she little dreamed was to give her immortality. It was the song of "The Blue-eyed Lassie." The blue-eyed lassie bloomed into womanhood; and, captivating the heart of Mr. James Renwick, a young merchant from New York, she married him, and soon removed to that city, where her husband became a prominent merchant of the highest reputation.

Miss Annie Stewart Cunningham.

THE above-mentioned lady—the heroine of “Anna, thy Charms,” “She’s Fair and Fause,” and “Had I a Cave”—was the daughter of John Stewart, Esq. of East Craigs. Burns’s friend Cunningham was for many years madly and hopelessly in love regarding her. Such was the strength of Cunningham’s craze for the object of his blighted love, that long after she had jilted him and had married Mr. Forrest Dewar, surgeon, and long after he himself had entered the married state, he was observed on many an evening stealthily to traverse for hours the opposite side of Princes Street, Edinburgh, where she resided, in order that he might catch a glimpse of her person. He would pause now and again opposite her windows, and seem gratified even with a passing glance of her shadow cast on the white screen by the light within; then he would burst into tears and wend his way slowly home by the most lonely path, absorbed in morbid contemplation.

His perjured “Anna” had three daughters and one son to her husband, Dr. Dewar, and her second daughter, Jessie, was justly celebrated as the loveliest girl who at that period adorned the Scottish metropolis. A clerk in the Royal Bank went almost out of his wits through his passion for her, and annoyed her with his addresses. The father of the young man was a woollen draper, and she looked for some higher connection. At length Kay, the caricaturist, put an extinguisher on the poor pilgrim of love by publishing an admirable likeness of the beautiful Jessie Dewar passing up the North Bridge followed by her imploring tormentor, whose likeness was equally perfect. A label from his mouth

displayed the words, "If it were not for these d——d blankets I would have got her!"

In 1838 Robert Chambers thus wrote regarding the widow of Dr. Dewar: "One evening, a few years ago, a friend of mine, visiting a musical family who resided in Princes Street, nearly opposite St. John's Chapel, chanced to request one of the young ladies to sing 'Had I a Cave, &c.' She was about to comply when it was recollected that the heroine of the lyric lived in the flat below, an aged widow, who might overhear it. For that reason the intention of singing the song was laid aside."

Rev. John Russell—"Black Jock."

PROFESSOR WILSON says of him: "We remember walking one day—unknown to us a fast-day—in the neighbourhood of an ancient fortress (Stirling), and hearing a noise to be likened to nothing imaginable in this earth but the bellowing of a buffalo fallen into a trap upon a tiger, which, as we came within half-a-mile of the castle we discerned to be the voice of a pastor engaged in public prayer. His physiognomy was little less alarming than his voice, and his sermon corresponded with his looks and his lungs—the whole being, indeed, an extraordinary exhibition of divine worship. We can never think it sinful that Burns should have been humorous on such a pulpiteer, and if we shudder at some of the verses in which he seems yet alive, it is not at the satirist."

The Heroine of Willie Wastle.

CUNNINGHAM tells us that the heroine of the above popular song was the wife of a farmer who lived near Burns at Ellisland. She was a very singular woman: tea, she said, would be the ruin of a nation; sugar was a sore evil; wheaten bread was only fit for babes; earthenware was a pick-pocket; wooden floors were but fit for threshing upon; slated roofs, cold; feathers, good enough for fowls—in short, she abhorred change, and whenever anything new appeared, such as harrows with iron teeth, “Aye, aye,” she would exclaim, “ye’ll see the upshot!”

Of all modern things she disliked china most; she called it “burnt clay,” and said it was only fit for “haudin’ the broo o’ stinkin’ weeds,” as she called tea. On one occasion a southern dealer in cups and saucers asked so much for his ware that he exasperated a peasant, who said, “I canna purchase, but I ken ane that will. Gang there,” said he, pointing to the house of Willie’s wife; “dinna be blate or burd-mouthed; ask a gude penny — she has the siller.” Away went the poor dealer, spread out his wares before her, and summed up all by asking a double price. A blow from her crummock was his instant reward, which not only fell on his person but damaged his china. “I’ll learn ye,” quoth she, as she heard the saucers jingle, “to come with yere brazent English face, and yere bits o’ burnt clay to me!” She was an unlovely dame; her daughters, however, were beautiful.

Lines to a Mountain Daisy.

THE following anecdote regarding Hew Ainslie and Burns’

Poems is recorded by Ainslie's biographer, Latto. He says—
 "A copy of Burns' Poems was on the table open at the page
 containing "Lines to a Mountain Daisy."

"Look there, noo," remarked Hew, "Mòuntain Daisy!—
 Mountain Daisy! Hech, wow! but the callant was in a creel
 to ca' it by siccan a term, and that after he had already
 kirsened it by its ain name, 'a gowan!' What Scotsman or
 Scotswoman or Scots bairn ever heard o't or kent it by sic a
 title? Mountain daisy! poof! That was ane o' the whim-
 whams o' Doctor Gregory. I wonder the Doctor didna per-
 suade him to ca' his 'mousie' a rodent! Let's see how that
 wad hitch in rhyme:—

'But *rodent*, thou art no alane.'
 'The best laid schemes o' *rodents* an' rogues
 Gang aft agley.'"

Here a series of hearty guffaws followed his quizzical
 commentary.

Wee Bobbie Burns.

THE Rev. G. Gilfillan many years ago visited the "auld clay
 biggin," at that time a hostelrie for dispensing Burns' beloved
 beverage, and other good things of this life. "We remember,"
 he says, "one rather odd circumstance: When looking at
 the concealed bed in which the poet was born, our companion
 (the gifted Rev. Dr. W. B. Robertson of Irvine) exclaimed,
 "Here's a laddie, here's wee Bobbie Burns!" A cry from
 the bed confirmed the words, and drawing near we tried to
 complete the glamourie of the scene by imagining that this
 boy who lifted up his arms and smiled was the inspired child
 to whose birth-place in that humble cottage the civilised
 world has flocked for well nigh one hundred years."

Burns at the Plough.

JOSEPH WRIGHT, of "Drooko" umbrella fame, tells a story of a farmer's criticism on a German print of "Burns at the plough." One day the narrator was looking at this picture in a place of public resort; and to a farmer by his side who was gazing intently at the work of art he observed, "This is the poet Burns?"

"Well, I suppose it's meant for him," replied the farmer, "but did ye ever see a man at the plough wi' his kirk coat on? Whaever pentit that picture kent little about Burns, and far less about the harness o' a pleugh horse. Man, the hale thing is ridiculous."

A Clergyman's Story.

PROFESSOR WALKER was intimate with a clergyman who knew Burns, and had repeatedly met him in company, "Where," said he, "the acuteness and originality displayed by him, the depth of his discernment, the force of his expressions, and the authoritative energy of his understanding, had created a sense of his power, of the extent of which I was unconscious till it was revealed to me by accident. On the occasion of my second appearance in the pulpit, I came with an assured and tranquil mind, and though a few persons of education were present, advanced some length in the service with my confidence and self-possession unimpaired; but when I saw Burns, who was of a different parish, unexpectedly enter the church, I was affected by a tremor and embarrassment, which suddenly apprised me of the impression which my mind, unknown to itself, had previously received." The Professor adds

that the person who had thus unconsciously been measuring the stature of the intellectual giant, was not only a man of good talents and education, but "remarkable for a more than ordinary portion of constitutional firmness."

Burns and the Hindoos.

DR. DUFF tells of how he has heard the swarthy sons of Brahma on the banks of the Ganges—when reviewing the unnatural institution of caste, in alienating man from man, and looking forward to the time when knowledge would lift the lowest to a level with the highest—suddenly, in an ecstasy of delight, repeat the lines—

“ For a’ that, and a’ that,
It’s coming yet for a’ that ;
That man to man the world o’er
Shall brithers be for a’ that.”

Who’s “Wah Hay?”

THE following is culled from the “Singapore Free Press.” “A certain enterprising gentleman that many of us know pretty well in Singapore, who has been asserted to have occupied himself lately in coating Hong Kong with vermilion, was present at a recent convivial entertainment there, at which assisted a strong force of true Caledonians. That immortal patriotic lyric of Burns, ‘Scots wha ha’e wi’ Wallace bled,’ had just been chanted forth in rousing style by the full strength of the company. After its echoes had

died away, and the toddy tumblers were being duly replenished, our friend was noticed to be brooding over some brow-knitting enigma. At last his perplexities found utterance, and in a markedly colonial accent, he thus spoke—"But, look here, who's 'Wah Hay?'"

"An' then he Made the Lasses, O!"

A VERY apt and appropriate quotation of Burns' well known lines was once made by the late Rev. Dr. Gillan of Inchinnan, who was gifted with a fund of dry and ready humour. The doctor had a numerous progeny; and on one occasion, when he had gone to a country parish to preach for a friend, conversation at the tea-table in the manse turned on the subject of his family. "What a singular thing, doctor," remarked the hostess, "that all your sons should come first, and the rest of the family be made up of girls." Not at all, ma'am, not at all," rejoined the sturdy old Clergyman:

"My 'prentice han' I tried on man,
An' then I made the lasses, O!"

A Snuff-box.

MR. BACON, who kept a celebrated posting-house north of Dumfries, was the almost inseparable associate of Robert Burns. Many a merry night did they spend together over their toddy. The bard and the inn-keeper became so attached to each other, that Burns gave his friend, as a

token of regard, the snuff-box which had been for many years his pocket companion. The knowledge of this pledge of amity was confined to a few of their jovial crew until after Bacon's death in 1825, when his furniture and effects were put up for sale by public auction, and, amongst other articles, Mr. Bacon's snuff-box was offered to the highest bidder. "A shilling!" some one instantly cried. There was a general exclamation that the article was not worth twopence, and the auctioneer seemed in haste to knock it down, when, looking intently at the lid, he read, and shouted out with stentorian voice, "Robert Burns, officer of the Excise." Scarcely had he uttered the words before his audience bid for it as one man; shilling after shilling was confusedly offered for this genuine relic of Scotland's sweetest singer. The greatest anxiety prevailed, while the biddings rose higher and higher, till it was finally knocked down for five pounds—not a bad price in those days for a Burns relic. The box was made of the tip of a horn, neatly turned round at the point, and the lid mounted with silver, on which his name was engraven.

Pate McPhun at the Festival.

BEING enamoured of Burns and everything that has a tendency to keep his memory green, as a natural consequence Saturday last found me in the Kay Park, Kilmarnock, waiting patiently for the proceedings to commence. The place was literally swarming with spectators, all dressed in their gayest attire, amongst whom I noticed a good sprinkling of the black cloth. 'Twas evident they were remembering the Saturday to keep it a holiday. While standing gazing pensively down the slope on this human hive, my hand

mechanically went to my hat; my pent-up feelings gave way, and I cried, in a voice that was husky with emotion—

“And is all this brilliant assemblage of wit, learning, and beauty met to do honour to the memory of the immortal Robert Burns?”

“Bless me!” exclaimed an old woman at my elbows, “he’s shuirly been a man wi’ a wonnerfu’ memory when they mak’ sae muckle adae about it.”

“Madam,” I observed reproachfully, “you do not understand. You probably are not aware that Robert Burns was a genius among geniuses; that he was one of the brightest stars in the poetical firmament. In fact, he was a man that was born before his time.”

She said she bodna muckle broos o’ them that was born before their time; in a’ her experience she’d fand that them that were born at the usual time were the healthiest!

He did not Know Burns.

HAVING lost my copy of Burns some time ago, I went into the book-shop of this town—Vryheid, Transvaal—to buy another. The proprietor (Von Schalweedenberg) was also the librarian of a circulating library.

“Could you oblige me with a copy of Burns?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I wish to buy a copy of Burns.”

“I don’t know what you said, sir.”

“Do you know Robert Burns?”

“I haven’t the pleasure of that gentleman’s acquaintance.”

“I want the works of Burns.” I emphasised the name here, and thought I could detect by the man’s face a ray of light struggling into his brains.

"O ho! I have an excellent treatise by our great Medical Doctor, Herr Gottenburg, on the very subject. It's entitled, 'How to treat and cure burns.'" At this stage of the dialogue I raised my voice and thundered, by way of explanation,

"Robert Burns was a man who lived in the west of Scotland a hundred years ago, who wrote poems. Those poems have been published, translated into many languages, and retailed all over the world. Those poems have exercised a mighty influence in exposing hypocrisy, giving thought a higher elevation, giving subtle expression to that divine spark within the human breast we vulgarly call love, which sentiment I dare say you yourself have felt, sir. Do you know him now?"

"Never heard of him before."

"Do you know Goethe?"

"Oh, I know him well."

"Well, Burns is the Scotch Goethe, and your education is not complete till you know him."

Charles Lamb and Burns.

SOME one was praising our public schools to Charles Lamb, and said—"All our best men were public school men. Look at our poets. There's Byron, he was a Harrow boy."

"Yes," interrupted Charles, "and there's Burns, he was a plough boy."

Burns and Fergusson.

THAT Burns erected a monument over the grave of Fergusson,

the poet, is well known—not so, hitherto, a little circumstance of interest connected with this honourable tribute to a brother-poet. It now appears that two years elapsed before Burns was able to pay for the monument—as witness a letter to Hill, dated in 1793:—"I send you by the bearer, Mr. Clarke, a particular friend of mine, six pounds and a shilling, which you will dispose of as follows:—"Five pounds ten shillings, per account, I owe to Mr. R. Burn, architect, for erecting the stone over the grave of poor Fergusson. He was two years in erecting it after I had commissioned him for it, and I have been two years in paying him, after he sent me his account; so he and I are quits. He had the *hardiesse* to ask me interest on the sum; but considering that the money was due by one poet for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank heaven that he ever saw a farthing of it."

David Sillar.

EARLY associated with Burns, published a volume of indifferent poetry in 1789. He commenced life as a grocer in Irvine, but gave it up and became a teacher. In later years he acquired considerable wealth, and was a member of the Town Council for many years, part of which time he acted as magistrate of the burgh. He died in 1830, at the age of seventy. One of the most remarkable incidents in his life is, that notwithstanding his connection with Burns, which alone has preserved his name from oblivion, it is said that he became so penurious in his habits, as to refuse to subscribe for the monument to the poet erected on the banks of Doon.

THE END.



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